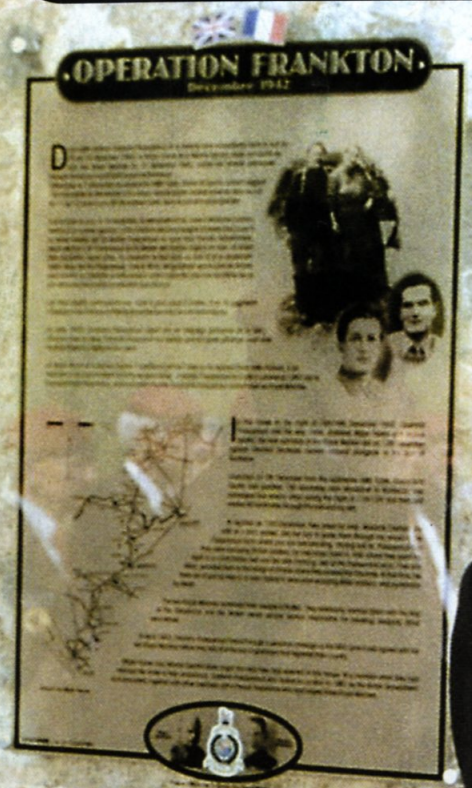
AFTER THE BATTLE



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Front cover: Ex-Marine Bill Sparks, the last surviving member of the Cockleshell Heroes, at the unveiling of the first Frankton Trail plaque at Nâpre farm, June 12, 2002. (CPO George Tweedie)

Centre pages: Looking down the Garonne river from Bordeaux to its confluence with the Dordogne, this bird's eye view shows much of the 75-mile stretch of river paddled by the Cockleshell raiders in December 1942. The Pont d'Aquitaine motorway bridge was constructed after the war. At lower right is the quay of Bassens South where the crew of *Crayfish* holed the cargo ships *Alabama* and *Portland*. (Port de Bordeaux)

Back cover: The Allied Prison at Werl in the British Zone of Occupation as it appears today. (Helmuth Euler)

Acknowledgements: The Editor would like to thank Pierre Bonneaud, Jean-Marie Germain and the Port de Bordeaux authorities for their help with the Cockleshell Heroes story and we are indebted to the Justizvollzugsanstalt Werl for their grateful co-operation in the production of the feature on the Werl Allied Prison.

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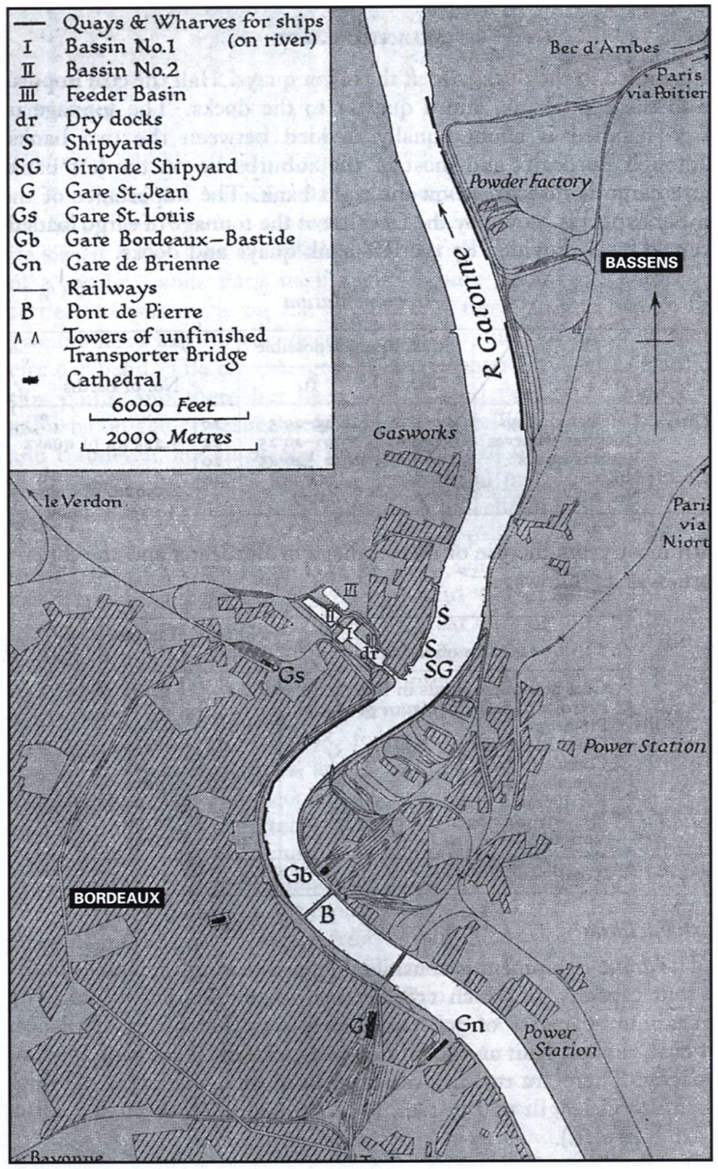


From the *Geographical Handbook Series, France (Ports and Communications)*, Volume IV, issued by the Naval Intelligence Division in October 1942: 'The maritime port of Bordeaux proper extends for 13 kilometres downstream from the Pont de Pierre and includes Bassens on the right bank and Grattequina on the left bank. Access is possible at HWLN for vessels drawing 8.75m (29.7ft) and at MHWS for vessels drawing 8.75m (29.7ft). Besides the extensive river quays there are two wet docks with an area of 16 ha. These basins are entered by two parallel locks. Generally speaking, the passenger and cargo liners use the river quays in the city; coal, timber and other heavy goods are handled in the docks and at the lower quays. Half the coal imports go to the right bank, and a quarter to the docks. The tonnage of cargo handled is about equally divided between the two banks. Although Bordeaux and most of the suburbs lie on the left bank, most cargo is discharged on the right bank. The left bank quays have berths for 20 ships, the Queyries wharves can accommodate 12 ships, and Bassens another 20 — the total length of quays of these three being 7,225 metres. The crane equipment is considerable, comprising 177 cranes under 10 tons capacity, of which 158 are electric; six floating cranes (with a maximum capacity of 300 tons); 46 other lifting appliances for coal, timber, fruit and grain cargoes; and a fixed crane of 250 tons capacity. There are two dry docks at Bordeaux, the larger of which has a useful length of 157.1m (515ft) and a depth on the sill of 7.5m (24.6ft). There are 176km of railways in the port. It is served both by the Western and South-Western regions of the SNCF. From Bordeaux electrified main lines run northwards to Tours and Paris and southwards to the Spanish border, while a branch serves the liner mole at Le Verdon.'

THE COCKLESHELL HEROES RAID

In December 1942, a unit of Royal Marines in two-man canoes paddled 75 miles up the Gironde and Garonne rivers to place limpet mines on the hulls of German blockade-running ships in Bordeaux harbour. Five ships were damaged but of the ten marines taking part in this daring suicide mission, code-named Operation 'Frankton', two drowned, six were caught and executed by the Germans, and only two escaped with their lives. The 'Cockleshell Heroes Raid', as it became more popularly known, thrilled the world and has become part of British military legend. Here, Major H. G. Hasler, commander of the Royal Marines Boom Patrol Detachment (RMBPD), who led the raid and was one of the two survivors, and his second-in-command, Captain Jock Stewart (not on the raid), demonstrate the Cockle Mk II, the heavy-duty folding canoe especially designed and developed by Hasler for this type of saboteur actions. They are wearing the Cockle jackets, also designed by Hasler himself. The picture was taken at Southsea in May 1943, one month after Hasler's return from the Bordeaux raid.

By Brigadier Tony Hunter-Choat, OBE and Major Mark Bentinck, Royal Marines Historian

The 'Cockleshell Heroes' raid on Bordeaux, carried out by Royal Marines canoeists in December 1942, is well known, through the 1950s book and film of that name. It is worth recalling, in this the 60th anniversary year of the raid, just what an achievement it was, at a very low point in Britain's war fortunes: one should remember, too, that the cost was high — of the ten men who took part, eight died on the operation.

In the foreword to C. E. Lucas Phillips' 1956 book *Cockleshell Heroes*, Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten of Burma, the former Chief of Combined Operations, wrote:

'Of the many and dashing raids carried out by the men of Combined Operations Command, none was more courageous or imaginative than Operation 'Frankton'.

'An immense amount of trouble was taken over the training of the small handful of picked Royal Marines who took part under the indomitable leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel (then Major) Hasler. They maintained their object in spite of the frightening losses of the first night and the subsequent ever-increasing difficulties they encountered. Although the force had been reduced to four men, the object was finally achieved.

'The account of this operation brings out the spirit of adventure always present in peace and war among Royal Marines. It emphasizes the tremendous importance of morale — pride in oneself and one's unit — and what a big part physical fitness plays in creating this morale. It also stresses the need for careful detailed planning of operations.

'I commend it to all as an account of a fine operation, carried out by a particularly brave party of men.'

Herbert 'Blondie' Hasler was born in Dublin on February 27, 1914. He joined the Royal Marines in September 1932 and soon made his mark in his love of boats and his sometimes unconventional approach. He distinguished himself as a Landing Officer with the RM Fortress Unit in the Norwegian campaign during the spring of 1940, being awarded the OBE and Croix de Guerre. Already in the spring of 1941, Hasler had submitted to Combined Operations HQ a detailed plan for attacking enemy ships by the use of canoes and underwater swimmers.

The Royal Marines Boom Patrol Detachment was formed on July 6, 1942. The period from July 6 to October 28 was spent based at Southsea (Portsmouth) training in canoeing, handling of various types of assault boats under oars and paddles, swimming, weapon training, shallow water diving and motor boat driving. Here men of the all-volunteer unit practice their rowing skills in a helmsman-steered assault boat.

One of the perks of the RMBPD was that the men were allowed to billet locally. Most were quartered at this house, 'White Heather' — No. 27 Worthing Road, Southsea.

INTRODUCTION

By late 1941 the constraints on mercantile movement, particularly by sea, were imposing severe hardships on both the British and the Germans. Neither country possessed sufficient natural resources to wage a war at the scale then being carried out, and both were dependent on external sources of supply. The Germans in particular had a need for oil, rubber and tungsten, and certain other essential metals and alloys: a trading operation was set up using fast civilian freighters, which sailed alone, under conditions of great security, between the Far East and Europe.

This was no small-scale operation. As an example of the importance of just one ship — to both sides — the freighter *Osorno* in her approach to Bordeaux was covered by 13 U-Boats, and 11 surface ships, while the Allies were looking for her with a US carrier and three destroyers. The RAF launched eight Halifax bombers and 53 Mosquitoes and Beaufighters against her, but she still reached France. Indeed, since the overland route through Russia had been denied them, the long sea voyage was the only method of physical communication between Germany and Japan, with key personnel also being moved. The trade was not only from the Far East to Europe, but samples of the latest technology — radar and wireless parts, fuses and ball bearings — went the other way. However the import of rubber was critical to the German war effort: whilst they were able to make synthetic rubber, natural rubber was vital for key items such as aircraft tyres. In the 12 months prior to mid-1942, some 25,000 tons of crude rubber passed through Bordeaux.

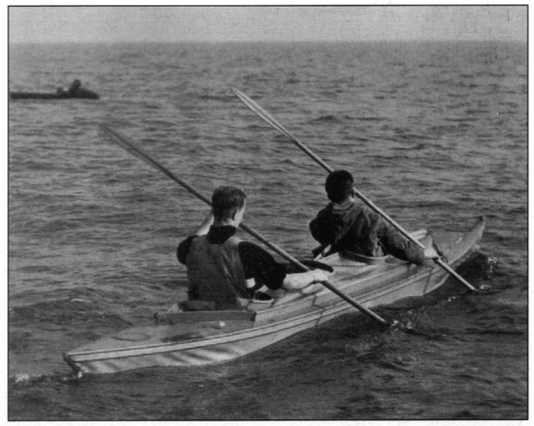
The British Minister for Economic Warfare, Lord Selborne, was extremely concerned about the amount of essential supplies reaching occupied Europe, and he wrote to both Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee on several occasions expressing this concern.

In 1941 Churchill established Combined Operations, an all-arms headquarters tasked with studying every imaginable means, big or small, of striking at Germany, and with the authority to initiate and conduct offensive operations. By the time of Operation 'Frankton' its head was Lord Louis Mountbatten.

Twenty-eight-year-old Major Herbert 'Blondie' Hasler, Royal Marines, joined Mountbatten's team in early 1942 and was posted to the Combined Operations Development Centre (CODC) where he had considerable freedom of action in developing means to attack enemy shipping. His main aim at that time was the development and construction of an explosive speedboat, based on an Italian idea. (The Italians were well ahead of the Allies in this special field, with their 'human torpedo' attacks on Allied ships in the Mediterranean — see *After the Battle* No. 10 — crowned by their success in crippling the *Valiant* and *Queen Elizabeth* in Alexandria in December 1941). Hasler had had a lifelong love of small boats, a great inquisitiveness, an inventive mind and a lust for adventure. He was also a thoroughly good Royal Marines officer. As early as 1941, and well before the arrival of Mountbatten, he had written a proposal for attacks on enemy shipping in harbours using canoes and underwater swimmers. Like all good ideas produced before their time, the proposal had been rejected. Despite his main task of developing the explosive speedboat he retained his love of small boats in general and of canoes in particular, and set about developing a canoe light enough for two men to paddle yet strong enough to carry up to 75 kilograms of stores plus two men, and rigid enough to be lifted, dragged and slid across the mud, sand or shingle with all the stores and the men in place. With the enthusiastic co-operation of Fred Goatley, of Saro Laminated Wood Products on the Isle of Wight, the result of a lot of work, study, and trials was the 'Cockle Mark II'. It was in Cockle Mark IIs that Operation 'Frankton' was carried out.

The Mark II was a fully decked two-man canoe designed to carry its crew of two plus their stores. It was 17 feet 4 inches long, 28½ inches beam and 11¼ inches high; the width and height were limited by the size of a submarine's forward torpedo hatch. The canoe, empty, weighed about 105 lbs (36.5 kilograms).

The canoe-borne sabotage unit got its peculiar name from the Solent Boom, the anti-submarine boom running from Southsea to the Isle of Wight, near which the unit carried out most of its training. The wartime boom survives to this day. Usually submerged, Mark Bentinck photographed it at low tide in 2002.



Left: **The Mark II had double-blade paddles which could be converted in seconds to two single paddles. Double blades were faster but they had a high rise which might catch a reflection, so in risky circumstances single-blade, low-rise paddles were better. Here Hasler and Stewart practice a beach launch with split paddles.** *Right:* **Captain Stewart (front) and 2nd Lieutenant Edward Wright (rear) in an experimental three-seater version of the Mark II, pictured in October 1943.**

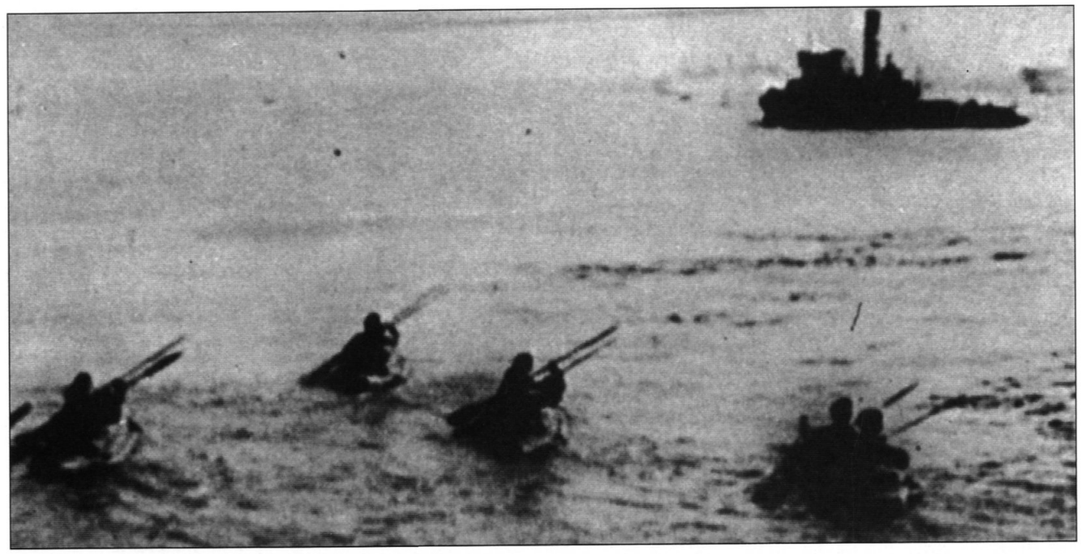
Hasler proposed the formation of a new unit, with the cover title of the Royal Marines Boom Patrol Detachment (RMBPD), to conduct experiments with the equipment he was inventing and acquiring, and eventually to go to war with it against Germany. This cover name was devised so as to explain their presence, at all times of day or night, on and around harbour defences. This was all very logical and the proposal was approved. Major Hasler set about recruiting to his new unit the best marines he could find, until it reached its total strength of 34 – bear in mind that RM units had already been 'trawled' for Commando volunteers. Those Hasler selected he did so for their self-reliance, mental stability, tenacity and powers of endurance. They were to need all these qualities in abundance in the months to come.

Based at Lumps Fort, Southsea, and billeted locally, their training was very hard. Initially the only one of the unit who knew anything at all about canoes was Hasler himself, but because of the abundance of natural intelligence among his men they soon learnt the necessary skills. Considering that the unit was formed on July 6, 1942, and set off on the raid at the end of that November, Hasler's achievement in training them was remarkable. This was not simply paddling a canoe — this was the ability to navigate accurately at night in coastal waters, in all weathers, to build a hide, and to be expert in camouflage, and a host of associated special skills. To the art of paddling a canoe both swiftly and silently, and night navigation, was added continuous and ever harder endurance training; this was just as well as, although they did not yet know it, they would have about 150 kilometres to paddle from their launch submarine to Bordeaux, weighed down with nearly 75 kilograms of stores and explosives. But, of course, at this stage they had no idea what they were training for. Neither, yet, did Hasler.

Hasler and Stewart in a Cockle Mk II powered by an experimental Ljungstrom sail of camouflaged parachute silk. The sail was goose-winged using the paddles as booms. This picture was also taken at Southsea in May 1943.

THE COCKLESHELL HEROES
This plaque provided by Portsmouth City Council was unveiled by Marine Bill Sparks DSM
on 6th July 1992 in the presence of the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Councillor Jim Patey
and the Chairman of the Leisure Committee Councillor Syd Rapson BEM
to mark the 50th Anniversary of this site which was used as a training base
for the Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment, formed on 6th July 1942.
This secret unit trained on the Solent for raids by canoe (Cockles) on Europe.
The most famous raid was made on German shipping in Bordeaux docks
on 11th December 1942 by ten members of RMBPD only two of these Cockleshell Heroes returned.
MAJ H HASLER OBE DSO RM
MNE W SPARKS DSM
CPL A LAVER
MNE W MILLS
CPL G SHEARD
LT J MACKINNON RM
MNE J CONWAY
SGT S WALLACE
MNE R EWART
MNE D MOFFAT

Left: **RMBPD headquarters was at Lumps Fort in Southsea, this plaque** *(right)* **now commemorating its wartime use.**



Selected to carry out the operation under Hasler's command was the RMBPD's No. 1 Section which immediately began a special training programme. From October 31 to November 6, the unit was in the submarine depot ship HMS *Forth* in Inchmarnock developing the technique of hoisting a boat out fully loaded by means of a tackle and a four-foot-long extension girder on the muzzle of a submarine gun (both also designed by Hasler himself). Training during this period included dummy limpet attacks on the Dutch ship *Jan van Gelder*. From October 10 to 14, the section carried out a five-day rehearsal, attacking the sloop *Deptford* from Margate via the Swale river in Exercise 'Blanket'.

Operation 'Frankton' was drafted by the operational planning staff of Combined Operations, the bulk of the planning being done by Lieutenant-Commander G. P. L'Estrange, RNVR, and kept on file. In response to Lord Selborne's concerns expressed to Churchill and Attlee about the quantity of blockade runners reaching the apparent safety of Bordeaux, the 'Frankton' draft was retrieved from the filing cabinet, and on September 21, 1942, Hasler was summoned to Combined Operations Headquarters in London to read the file and give his opinion as to the feasibility of the operation. He spent all day studying the outline plan and all available associated charts, and the next morning submitted his written plan for the operation. On October 30, Lord Mountbatten wrote the following memorandum to the Chiefs of Staff Committee:

'1. Operation 'Frankton' has been planned to meet Lord Selborne's requirements, referred to in COS (42) 223 (O) and subsequent papers, that steps be taken to attack Axis ships which are known to be running the blockade between France and the Far East.

'2. Both seaborne and airborne methods of attacking the ships have been carefully examined and the plan now proposed is the only one which offers a good chance of success.

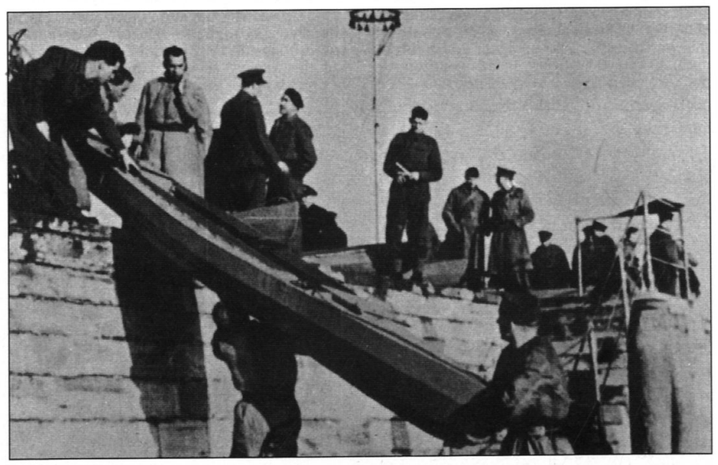
'3. On an average, between six and ten blockade runners are usually to be found alongside the quays at Bordeaux, in addition to other shipping. It is hoped to deal with at least six blockade runners.

'4. Briefly, the plan is for one officer and five other ranks of the Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment to paddle up the river Gironde in cockles, moving during the hours of darkness only, and to place 'limpets' on the waterline of the ships they find at Bordeaux. The cockles will be carried to within nine miles of the mouth of the river in a submarine which will be on passage to normal patrol duty and thus will not require to be specially detailed.

'5.Twelve copies of the summary of this outline plan are attached.'

Operation 'Frankton' was under way. From the day Hasler submitted his plan and returned to his base at Southsea near Portsmouth, training intensified. Only his second-in-command, Captain Jock Stewart, knew of the operation; he and Hasler worked hard, modifying the canoes, sorting out the necessary stores and rations, refining everything over and over again. The operational plan itself underwent many revisions and refinements. Arrangements had to made for the use of a submarine from which to launch the canoes and the operation, tides had to be studied in great detail, and the training of the men in canoe work, navigation and in the planting of limpet magnetic mines had to continue.

Although the movie *Cockleshell Heroes* shows Hasler and his men planting limpet mines by using frogman's equipment and diving to place the mines low on the hull, this was most certainly not the method used in training or on the actual operation. Hasler's method of placing mines was that used by, and learned from, 101 Troop of the Army Commandos who, in their raid on Boulogne in 1941, sank a large tanker. The 101 Troop method was to lower the limpet mine with a two-metre-long placing rod, and to ease it gently onto the ship's side until it attached itself by its magnet; the rod was then released from the mine and used again for subsequent mines. Because nearly all ships were divided into watertight compartments several mines were needed for each ship, usually three, including one on the engine room to cause maximum damage. The mines had acid-activated time-delay fuses. Each canoe carried eight mines.



Returning to HMS *Forth*, the final period before departure on the mission (November 19-29) was spent preparing and packing stores, testing hoisting gear under full load, field training ashore, etc. This period included another day and night of training in limpet attacks on the *Jan van Gelder* in Loch Long.

The Royal Marines saboteur team was taken to the French coast by the submarine HMS *Tuna*, part of the 3rd Submarine Flotilla.

Lieutenant-Commander Dick Raikes, the skipper of *Tuna*.

THE ATTACK

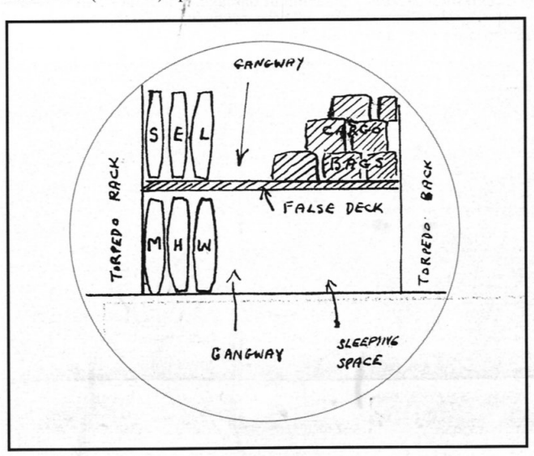
Major Hasler had divided his unit into two teams – No. 1 Section commanded by himself, and No. 2 Section commanded by Lieutenant W. Pritchard-Gordon. Within No. 1 Section there were six two-man Cockle Mark 2 canoes, each with a crew of two men, a No. 1 who commanded the canoe and a No. 2. For ease of identification, the canoes were named after fish: *Coalfish*, *Crayfish*, *Conger*, *Cachalot*, *Catfish*, and *Cuttlefish*.

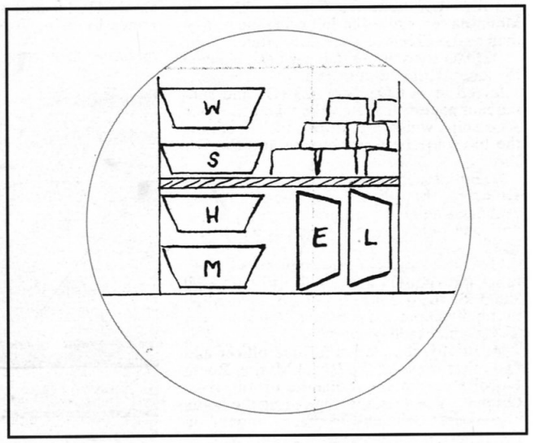
The operation was on. It was to be an attack by all six canoes of No. 1 Section (a late change of plan had increased the number of canoes from three to six) against merchant ships at the quays in Bordeaux. They were to be carried to the estuary of the Gironde by the submarine HMS *Tuna* (commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Dick Raikes, DSO) to an area about ten nautical miles (18 kilometres) south of Pointe de la Négade, and the plan was for them to launch from the submarine on the night of December 5/6, 1942. From the launching point, Hasler and his men would have to paddle 120 kilometres (75 miles) upriver to Bordeaux.

No. 1 Section complete with all its equipment and stores moved to the Clyde in late November, to link up with HMS *Tuna*, and on November 30 they embarked. The Cockle Mark II had been designed with loading into a submarine in mind, and it was possible to stow them on board via the forward torpedo hatch. For launching from the submarine Hasler had devised a sling attached to a beam on the underside of the submarine's main gun barrel, allowing the canoes, with men and equipment already aboard, to be suspended in the sling from the main armament and swung out by traversing the gun; they could then be lowered by hand into the sea. With practise all six canoes could be launched in just over half an hour. Once all the men, canoes and stores were on board they sailed, the *Tuna* slipping down the Clyde and out into the Irish Sea.

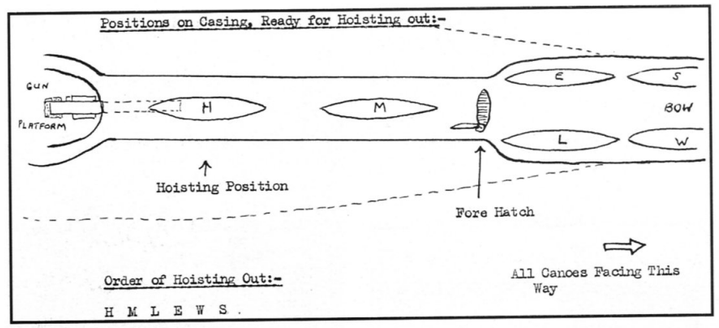
When they were on their way Major Hasler was able to brief his men on the forthcoming operation. He told them its name — 'Frankton'; about the blockade runners in Bordeaux; and the fact that any other form of attack had been ruled out as it would endanger the French civilian population. (An RAF raid in 1942 would have caused a considerable number of civilian casualties. The French today know this well, and are grateful to this day.) He also told them that they would travel by submarine for five days (it would turn out to be seven) and that having disembarked they would paddle north, between the headland and Cordouan lighthouse islet into the Gironde. Keeping to the side of the Gironde they would have about 60 nautical miles to paddle to reach Bordeaux, moving only at night and only with the flood tide, and hiding and resting by day and during the ebb. The plan was to reach Bordeaux after three nights paddling. He briefed them on the defences both afloat and on land and in the air. The aim of the operation was to sink up to 12 merchant ships in the Bassens-Bordeaux area.

During the days in the submarine, Hasler and his men went over the operation again and again until every detail was firmly fixed in their minds. All the equipment was unpacked, checked and re-packed, air photos were studied, and some effort was made to





Left: **Sketch from the operational report showing how the Royal Marines' six canoes (in folded condition) and their cargo bags were stored — between the submarine's torpedo racks — during the seven-day sea voyage to France, leaving just enough space for the 12 men to put down their sleeping bags.** *Right*: **Four hours before the expected disembarkation time the six crews started building up their canoes, one after the other, and stowing them in the ready-use position as shown here. The order in which the canoes were to be passed up through the hatch was laid down as W (Wallace and Ewart with *Coalfish*), S (Sheard and Moffatt with *Conger*), E (Ellery and Fisher with *Cachalot*), L (Laver and Mills with *Crayfish*), H (Hasler and Sparks with *Catfish*), and M (MacKinnon and Conway with *Cuttlefish*).**



Once on the deck of HMS *Tuna*, the Cockles were to be placed on the casing as shown in this sketch, with Hasler's boat to be launched first. All went well with the disembarkation until *Cachalot* knocked against the submarine's hatch clamp while coming out of the hatch, tearing an 18-inch hole in its canvas side and putting Ellery and Fisher out of the operation.

learn a little elementary French. At one point Major Hasler asked 'any questions?' 'Yes Sir', was the reply, 'how do we get back home?' 'You walk!', said Hasler. He briefed them that each two-man crew was to travel independently of the others, and that initially they were to head for Ruffec, a small town some 160 kilometres north of Bordeaux which lay on the demarcation line between German-occupied France and Vichy France (although the latter had been occupied by German troops a month earlier, the line was kept in being as an extra obstacle to movement). The escape plan anticipated that the local Resistance would be on the look-out for the escapers on the outskirts of Ruffec, feed them into their escape line, get them over the border into Spain, and thence back to England. Ruffec was chosen partly because the Resistance in that area was known to be well organised and part of MI9's 'Marie-Claire' escape network (run by Mary Lindell, British-born but for many years the Comtesse de Milleville), and partly because it was in exactly the opposite direction that the Germans would expect escaping enemy to travel.

HMS *Tuna* continued to travel south through quite rough weather and one encounter with an enemy submarine, until she was in the area of the drop-off point on December 6 (one day later than planned). The RAF had laid a minefield off the coast but its location was not known with any precision. The approach was, therefore, very cautious. When they first arrived in the area it was too misty to get an accurate fix and the operation had to be postponed for 24 hours. At last the weather cleared and at periscope depth Captain Raikes was able to get accurate fixes of their location, absolutely essential as Hasler's section had to set an accurate bearing on their compasses to pass through the gap between Cordouan and the mainland. Intense activity by enemy aircraft was observed throughout the day.

At 1917 hours on December 7 the submarine surfaced to a clear calm night. Major Hasler gave the order to bring up the canoes. One canoe, the *Cachalot*, snagged on a hatch clamp, tore a long rent in her canvas side, and had to be left behind with her heartbroken crew, Marine Bill Ellery and Marine Eric Fisher. The remaining five canoes launched safely, lowered into the sea each with its crew on board, using Hasler's sling on the gun: *Conger* with Corporal George Sheard and Marine David Moffatt, *Coalfish* with Sergeant Samuel Wallace and Marine Robert Ewart, *Crayfish* with Corporal Albert Laver and Marine William Mills, *Cuttlefish* with Lieutenant John MacKinnon and Marine James Conway, and *Catfish* with Major Hasler and his No. 2, Marine William Sparks.

Lieutenant-Commander Raikes, now nearly 90, recalls the launching operation well: 'It was a calm, clear night, but I was confident that we would not be seen, despite the considerable number of fishing boats, and German patrol activity. My look-outs were on the ball, and I knew I had a very low silhouette. My main worry was the RAF-laid minefield off the mouth of the Gironde — I knew its reported position, but knowing their accuracy their mines could have been anywhere!'

One would think that, rather than 'craning' the canoes over the side, it would have been easier — as was the procedure in later years — to line the canoes up on the casing, crews inside, and submerge. However, this procedure was not adopted because the noise of venting ballast tanks would have travelled a considerable distance.

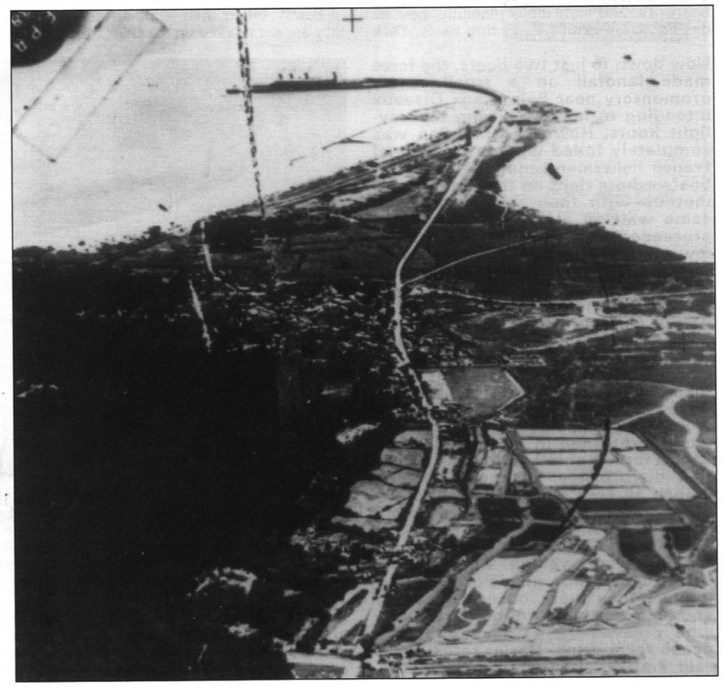
Before leaving *Tuna*, Hasler said to Raikes 'I'll be back in March — book a table at the Savoy for lunch on April 1. Thinking that this was an inappropriate date Raikes insisted that they make it April 2. How prescient Hasler was — April 2 was the day he finally arrived home! 'I didn't recognise him at first', says Raikes. 'He had aged ten years in those four months.'

No pictures were taken during the actual operation but the stills from the 1955 movie *The Cockleshell Heroes* provide a good impression of what it must have looked like. Of course, in reality the launch took place under cover of darkness.

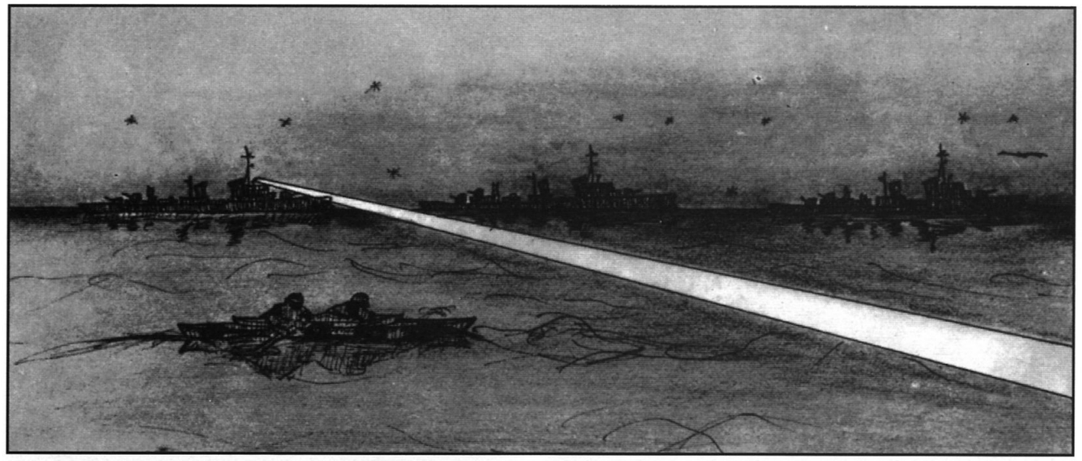
Within three hours after setting off, the raiding party lost two more boats. Sergeant Wallace and Marine Ewart disappeared at the first tidal race, and Corporal Sheard and Marine Moffatt capsized at the second. Forced to give up their Cockle, the unfortunate pair was told to hang on to the stern of the remaining canoes. This is how that scene was depicted in the movie. The treacherous tidal races came as a very unpleasant surprise to Hasler and his men, as there had been no indication of them whatsoever in the naval charts used in the planning. The overfalls were actually higher and more difficult to surmount than suggested in this still, Hasler noting in his report that the first had waves four feet high with breaking crests, the second was five feet high and breaking, and the third one three feet high and breaking.

The launching operation was completed in just over 40 minutes and at 2030 hours the submarine dived: the Cockleshell Heroes were on their way. Their journey began well, paddling through a smooth swell until around midnight when they reached the first of several tide races, where the water was rough and breaking. These tide races had not been anticipated in the planning and came as a nasty surprise. Hasler got his men together and briefed them on how to tackle the obstacle and they headed through. When they emerged at the far side there was no sign of Wallace and Ewart in *Coalfish*. Each man carried a whistle which produced a sound like a seagull's cry. Sparks blew his, but there was no reply. They waited and searched, but found nothing. They had to get on. By the time they reached Pointe de Grave, at the mouth of the Gironde, they met their second tide race, worse than before, with five-foot-high waves, and at an angle to their course. *Conger* capsized and threw Sheard and Moffatt into the water where they clung on to their canoe. Hasler stopped his men and they tried to refloat *Conger* but to no avail, so they had to scuttle her. The two men hung on to the backs of other canoes and were towed until they could swim ashore. Hasler and the others had to keep moving.

The three remaining canoes headed on through the next and final tide race without further mishap, towing the two marines until they were nearly at Le Verdon, the village on the western bank just inside the river mouth. By then the current was so powerful that they could no longer tow the two men and they dropped them near the Le Verdon pier. Knowing their chances of a safe return were slim, it was very hard for Hasler to have to tell Sheard and Moffatt that they would have to manage as best they could. Sheard said: 'That's all right sir, I understand. Thanks for bringing us so far.'



The boats with the two swimmers in tow drifted through the third tide race, rounding the Pointe de Graves riverhead until they got to the mole of Le Verdon, just inside the river. With orders to carry on regardless, Hasler had no choice but to tell Sheard and Moffatt — both by now very weak from the exertion and the hours spent in the icy water, but wearing inflated life vests — to let go and swim for the shore. This aerial of Le Verdon was one of a series of pictures collected as intelligence for 'Frankton' and used in the planning of the operation. The view is due west with the river on the left.



From Hasler's report: 'This incident wasted so much time that it was impossible to attempt to reach the east bank of the Gironde that night. Also, the remaining three boats were by now closer inshore than had been intended, and the strength of the tide compelled them to pass between the mole at Le Verdon and a line of three or four anchored vessels lying about a quarter mile north-east of it. These vessels appeared to be of the French "chasseur" type. In order to get through this defile unobserved, it was necessary to change over to single paddles and proceed with the utmost caution, so the three boats separated to a distance of several hundred yards between each to lessen the chance of being spotted. On getting clear of this danger, it was found that the third boat, *Cuttlefish* (Lieutenant MacKinnon and Marine Conway) had lost the formation. Nothing further was seen of this boat.' This sketch was drawn by Hasler after the war.

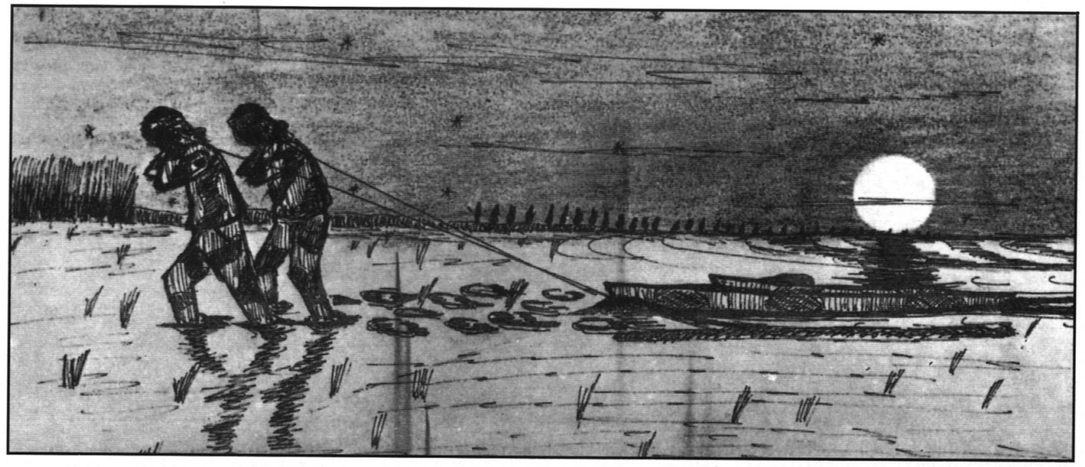
Just past the jetty were three small enemy frigates in line astern and Hasler and his men had to pass between the ships and the jetty, through a narrow gap. They were skilled at silent paddling, and with the Cockle's low silhouette, with the crew lying almost flat, and using single rather than the usual double paddles, they crept closer. At least two of them passed through but *Cuttlefish* with MacKinnon and Conway simply disappeared. The others waited . . . they gave their seagull calls . . . but there was no reply.

(We have always been intrigued in that, given Hasler's great experience in offshore boatwork, and meticulous planning, how he did not know about these tide races. Dick Raikes cannot explain. We visited a French gentleman, Roger Landes (who as 'Aristide' was a senior member of the Bordeaux Resistance) to find out what information they had provided for the raid. 'None' was the answer. 'We did not know it was taking place — but then we were SOE and were not informed' — which speaks volumes for the lack of co-operation and, at times, rivalry between the various organisations operating against the Germans in France. We finally contacted Ewen Southby-Tailyour, writer of Hasler's biography, and an experienced small-boat sailor himself, who checked and found that the tide races were not mentioned in the Admiralty Pilot for the Bay of Biscay, either then — or now: even today they are not marked on the chart for the area.)

The remaining two crews continued until nearly dawn on December 8 when at last at 0730, after 11 hours hard paddling through some very rough sea and having covered some 42 kilometres (26 miles), they came ashore at a sandy beach known as Pointe aux Oiseaux near the village of St Vivien, camouflaged the two canoes and themselves, and started to relax a little and rest. During the day they were spotted by a group of fishermen and their wives, who chose to breakfast exactly where they were hidden. Hasler spoke to them in his broken French, and they replied that they would make no promises. Hasler felt, however, that they would not betray his men. Nothing happened so apparently none of them did.

Now down to just two boats, the force made landfall on a small sandy promontory near Pointe aux Oiseaux intending to lay low during the daylight hours. However, this plan was completely foiled when a number of French fishermen brought their small boats ashore right on the same beach, met up with their womenfolk who came walking along the shore, and proceeded to have breakfast within a few yards of where the four men were hiding! Hasler explained to the surprised French party that they were British and implored them not to betray their presence. Some of the French were quite unconvinced and thought they must be Germans, but Hasler asked them to keep silent about them anyway. Breakfast over, the fishermen returned to their boats and the women to the village (some of the women returned in the afternoon to have a further chat!) There was no further disturbance, so apparently the French all kept quiet about their discovery. The fisherman with whom Hasler had done most of the talking at Pointe aux Oiseaux was Yves Ardouin. The following evening, when leaving their second hide near Port des Callonges, they were observed by yet another Frenchman, Alibert Decombe, who pressed them to come to his house for a drink. Hasler refused but said 'Perhaps after the war'.

The photograph shows Hasler and his wife Bridget, with Robert, Alibert's son, on one of several visits to the farm after the war. Alibert died in 1949, and the farm, 'La Présidente', together with the actual landing site near Port des Callonges, have disappared, to be replaced by the nuclear power station of Le Blayais.

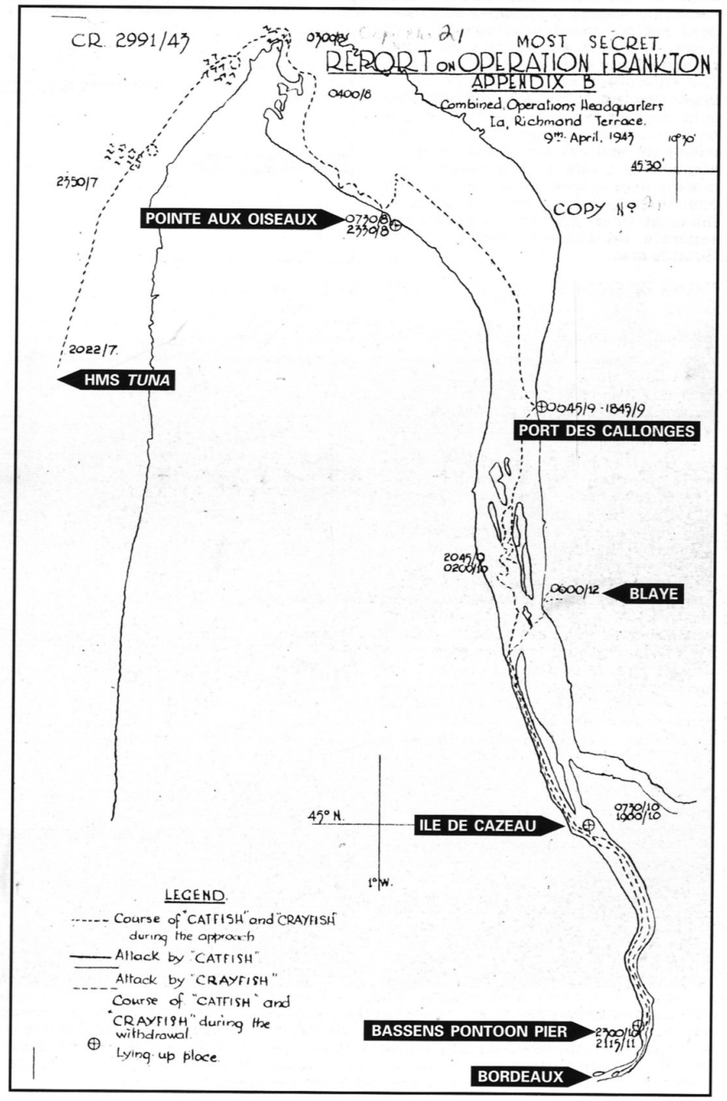


The second night began with a special problem as described in Hasler's report: 'It was not possible to resume the passage until the flood stream began to run at 2330, and as this was low water springs it was necessary to manhandle the boats over nearly three-quarters of a mile of sandy mud before we could launch them. The method employed was to drag the boats by their painters, fully loaded, which was only possible owing to the flat bottom and strong construction of the Cockle Mk II.'

The next night, December 8/9, having manhandled the two canoes over the mud and sandbanks, at about 2330 hours they paddled on up the Gironde while the tide was on the flood. Throughout the approach, they had to balance the often conflicting requirements of tide, moon and darkness. For six hours of flood tide they paddled hard, nearly being run down at one point by six or seven large ships making their way to Bordeaux, possible targets. Having covered another 40 kilometres (25 miles), they found a good hiding place between hedges north of Port des Callonges (on the river's east bank) and settled down for the day.

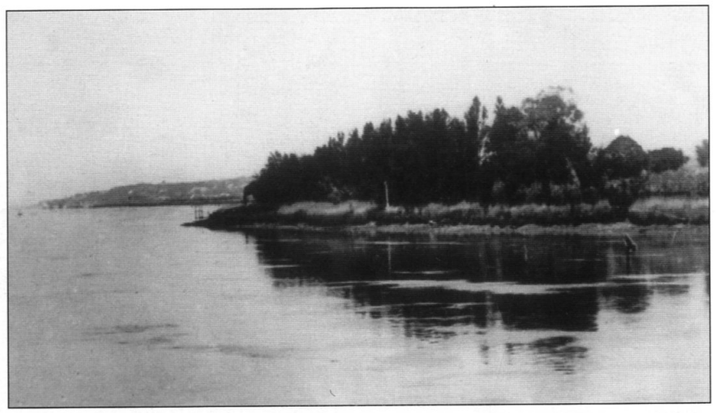
On their third night, December 9/10, they set off at 1845, as early as they could, and headed for the islands near Pauillac, finally hiding up for the day on the southern tip of the Ile de Cazeau, which lies just beyond the point where the Garonne and Dordogne rivers meet to form the Gironde (Bordeaux lies on the Garonne). They had covered another 28 kilometres (17 miles) and were now only some 20 kilometres from Bordeaux. Their hiding place was within sight of a German flak position. This was their most uncomfortable day because it was bitterly cold, it rained all day and they could neither cook nor smoke.

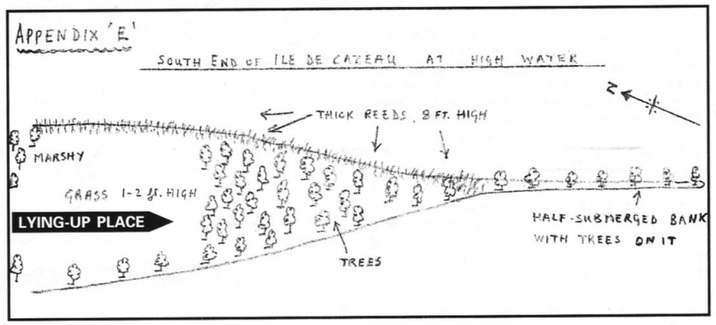
The next night, December 10/11, was the one on which Hasler had planned to carry out his attack against the shipping; but they still had too far to go, so he decided to make one more forward base, hide there the next day and attack the following night. That night, again leaving at 1845, they paddled 17 kilometres (11 miles) up the Garonne.



Sketch taken from Hasler's final report on 'Frankton' (submitted immediately after his return from France in April 1943) showing the route taken by *Catfish* and *Crayfish* from the launching point south of the Gironde estuary up the river to Bordeaux. The lying-up places are given with the dates and hours spent in hiding there. We have added the place names.

Right: **On the third night, December 9/10, *Catfish* and *Crayfish* entered the shallow passage between the Gironde's west bank and the Ile Verte. Hasler: 'We saw no sign of life in this area but as the passage was narrow we made ourselves as inconspicuous as possible by using single paddles and keeping right in close to the shores of the island which are covered in tall reeds.' This picture, another of those used during the planning, was taken looking back past the northern end of the Ile Verte to the east bank. (The ground photos used in the preparation of the raid appear to have been reproduced from pre-war snapshots taken from ships on their way to Bordeaux.)** *Centre*: **That night the crews were nearly caught by the dawning of the new day. 'By 0630 we were approaching the southern end of the Ile de Cazeau and began to look for a lying-up place on the island. It was only after considerable difficulty that we got ashore near a small pier about three-quarters of a mile from the southern tip of the island. A quick reconnaissance of the area disclosed what appeared to be a light ack-ack position about 40 yards away, in view of which we again embarked and proceeded further south. The situation was now getting rather urgent owing to the approach of daylight, and we finally put ashore at 0730 on the extreme southern tip of the island where we had not very good cover but placed the boats in the middle of a marshy field in long grass with the nets over them.' Hasler drew this sketch of the position after his return as part of a separate intelligence report on the Gironde area.**

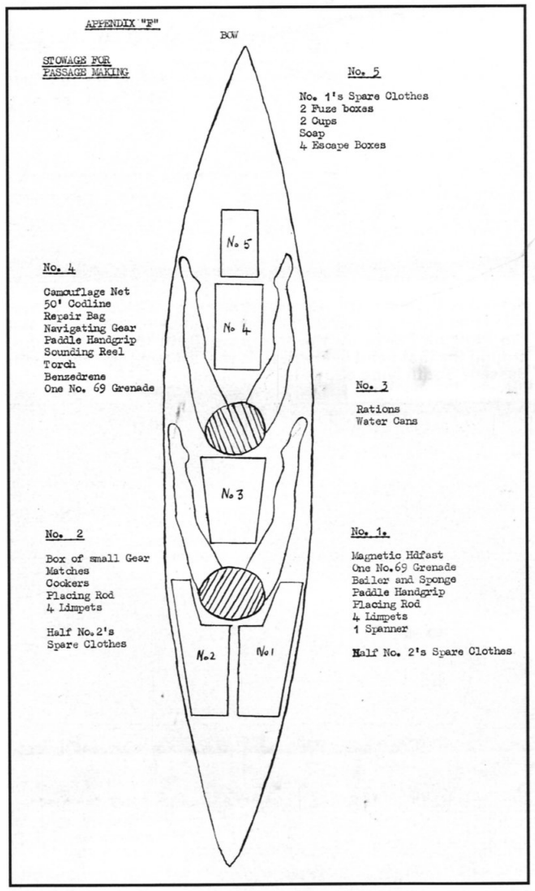


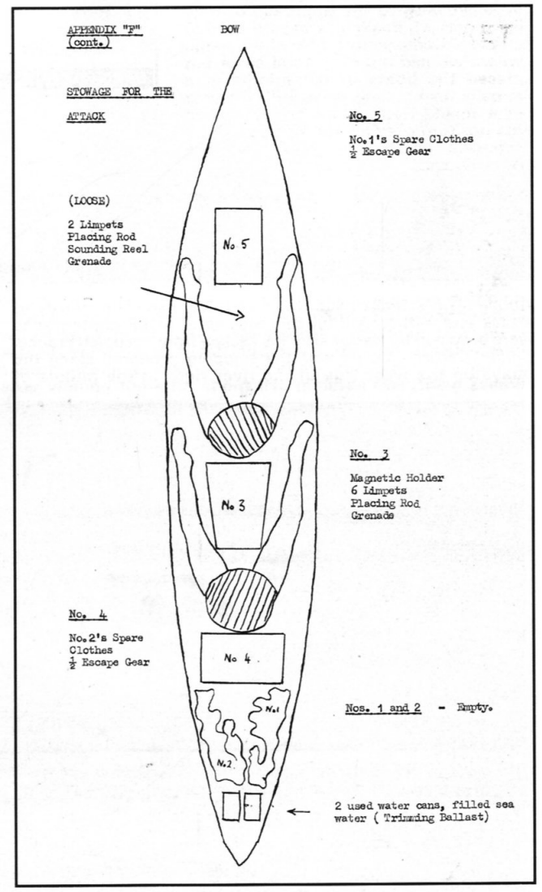


'We were not observed at all in this position, although a man and a dog came within 100 yards of us and at one time a herd of cattle came and stood around in a circle looking at us.' THE MOVIE. This still gives a nice impression of the situation complete with the cows, although in the actual operation the team at this point was down to two boats, not three. L-R are actors Anthony Newley (as Marine Clarke/Bill Sparks), Jose Ferrer (Major Thompson/Hasler) and Trevor Howard (Captain Thompson, a fictional character not based on any of the real participants).

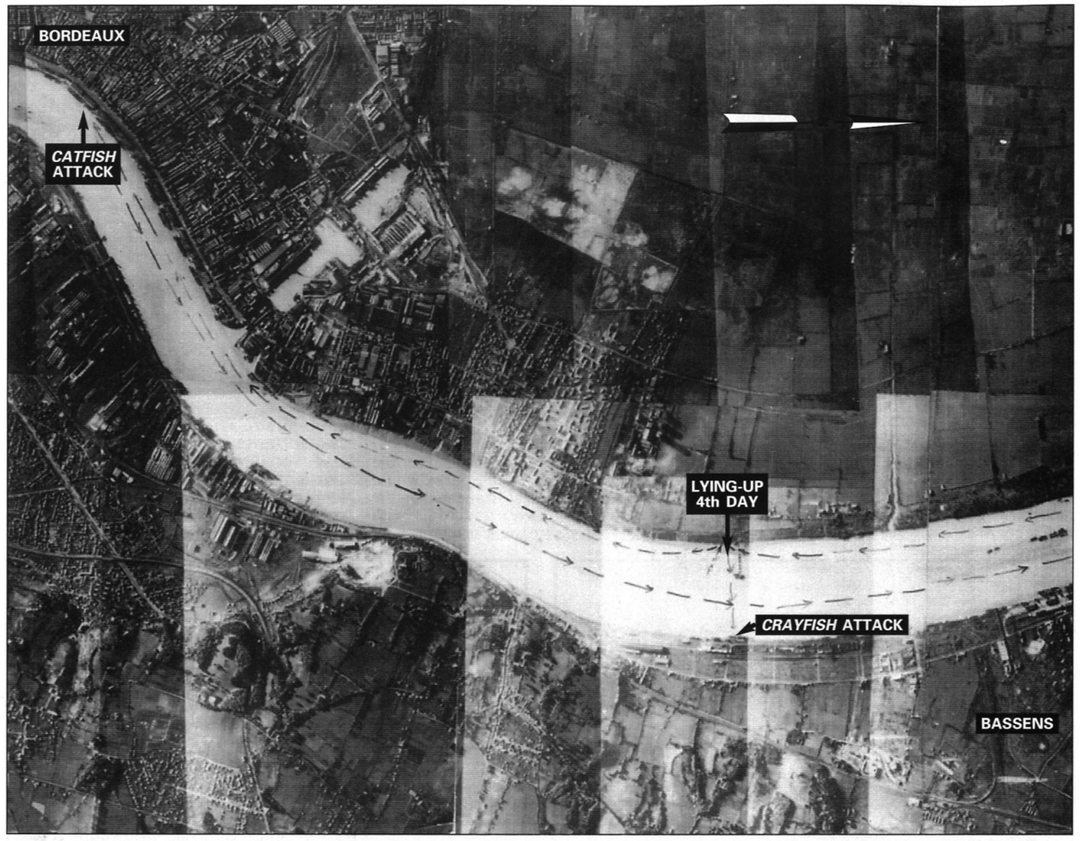
At 2300 hours on the night of December 10/11, the two crews reached their fourth and final lying-up place before the attack — a small gap in the reeds just 30 yards south of the pontoon pier opposite Bassens South. As the tide began to ebb, the boats dried out and the men made themselves comfortable for the night. Hasler: 'Daylight showed us that we had been fortunate in our lying-up place, as we were quite inaccessible and well concealed and at the same time by standing up were able to observe the traffic on the river and two good-sized ships lying alongside immediately opposite us about four cables away.' In 1969, German author and film-maker Janusz Piekalkiewicz took Hasler and Sparks back to France for the 'Frankton' episode of his 26-part documentary series *Secret Agents, Spies and Saboteurs*. Here they are standing in their hide-out in the reeds looking across the river to Bassens South.

They spent the next day in the rushes on the western bank of the Garonne, across the river from Bassens and three kilometres from Bordeaux harbour. The eight-foot-high reeds provided perfect cover. From where they were, they could see their first two targets — two fat merchant ships in Bassens South harbour. Hasler made his plan for the next night's attack. He and Sparks would head for the main docks at Bordeaux, on the western bank, and Laver and Mills with *Crayfish* would go to the Bordeaux East Docks and if they found nothing suitable there would return to the two ships at Bassens South. Between them they had 16 limpet mines. They armed their mines with nine-hour fuses and set off at 2115 hours on December 11, heading for their targets.





Left: **Appendix to the operational orders showing the stowage of gear in the canoes during the long approach voyage to Bordeaux. The all-important eight limpet mines were stored in bags Nos. 1 and 2 placed in the stern.** *Right*: **For the actual attack, the equipment was to be re-arranged as shown in this sketch. Having eaten up most of the rations, the men were to discard every item that they did not need for the attack itself or their own escape. Two of the limpets and a placing rod were to be lying ready for use between the legs of the No. 1 man with the remaining six limpets in a bag in front of the No. 2. To counterbalance the shifted weight of the limpets, two cans filled with sea water were to be placed in the stern.**

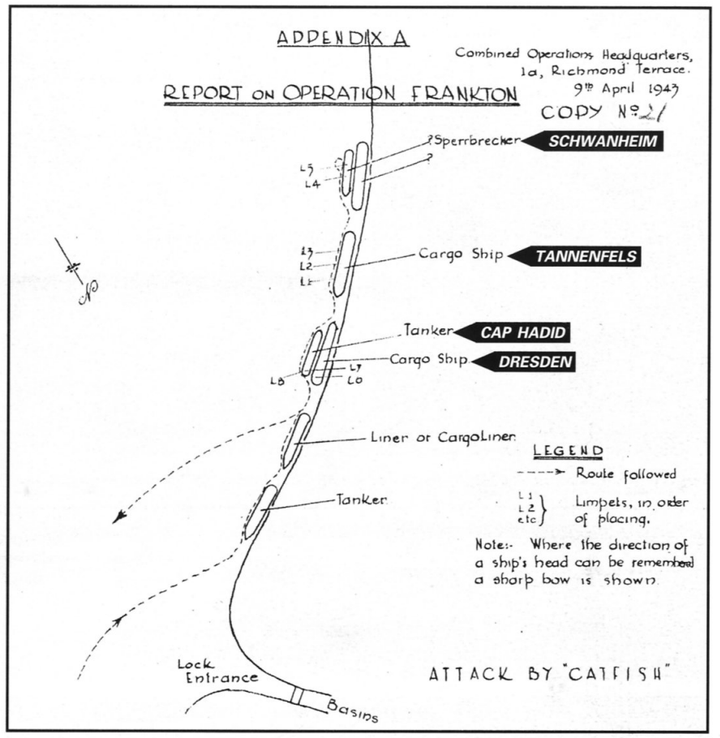


Above: **The attacks by *Catfish* and *Crayfish*. The routes of attack and withdrawal on this mosaic of aerial photographs were drawn in by Hasler after his escape from occupied France. *Below*: *Catfish*'s target was the shipping anchored along the quays on the west side of the river right in the middle of Bordeaux harbour. The vessels attacked by *Catfish* lay alongside Quai Carnot between the lock entrance to the basins and the Pont de Pierre (in the foreground). In the background, around the first bend in the river, is the last lying-up place, with Bassens South lying opposite.**

The crew of *Catfish*: 'Blondie' Hasler *(above)* and Marine Bill Sparks *(below).*

They had very little time as the tide was starting to turn. Hasler and Sparks reached their target area after about an hour and a half's hard paddling and found a total of seven ships awaiting their attention alongside Quai Carnot. Further upstream they could see more but the tide would prevent them going further. They initially ignored the two tankers, as fuel vessels have so many watertight compartments that mines the size of limpet would have little effect. First they placed three limpets on a large cargo ship, following this with two on a German Sperrbrecher (a small militarised freighter), two on a cargo ship, and the last on a small tanker moored alongside the last cargo ship at Quai Carnot. Then they headed at all speed 20 kilometres back downstream to the calm water inshore of the Ile de Cazeau. There they rested and drifted gently downstream. Suddenly they heard the noise of paddles; it was Laver and Mills in *Crayfish* who had completed their task of mining the two freighters in Bassens South, having found nothing further on.

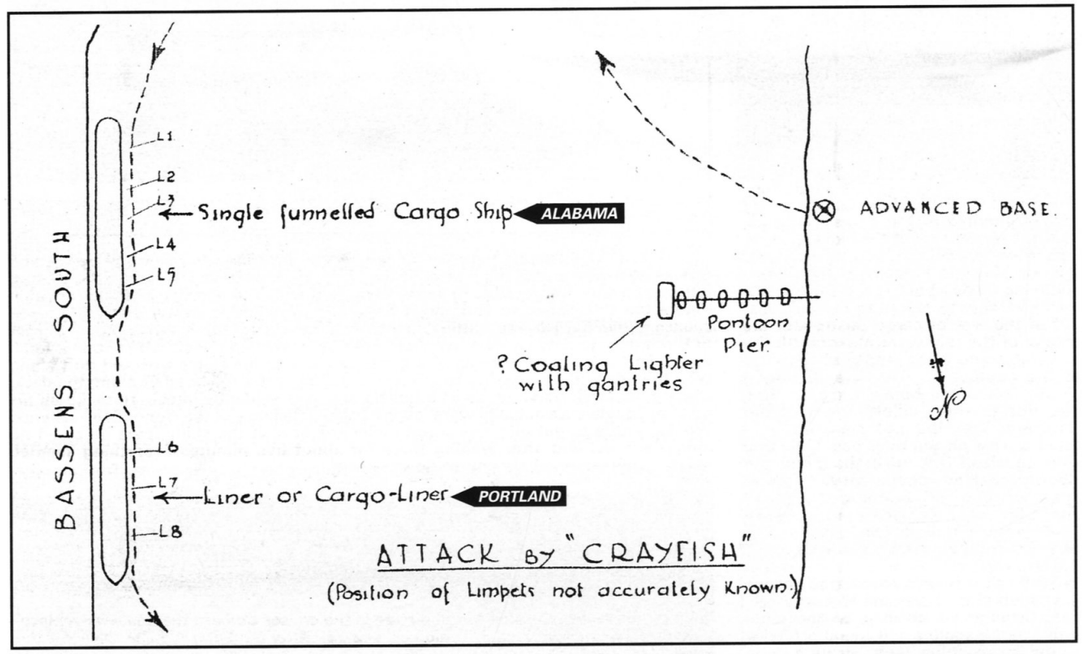
Right: Catfish **approaching one of its preys, as depicted in the movie.**



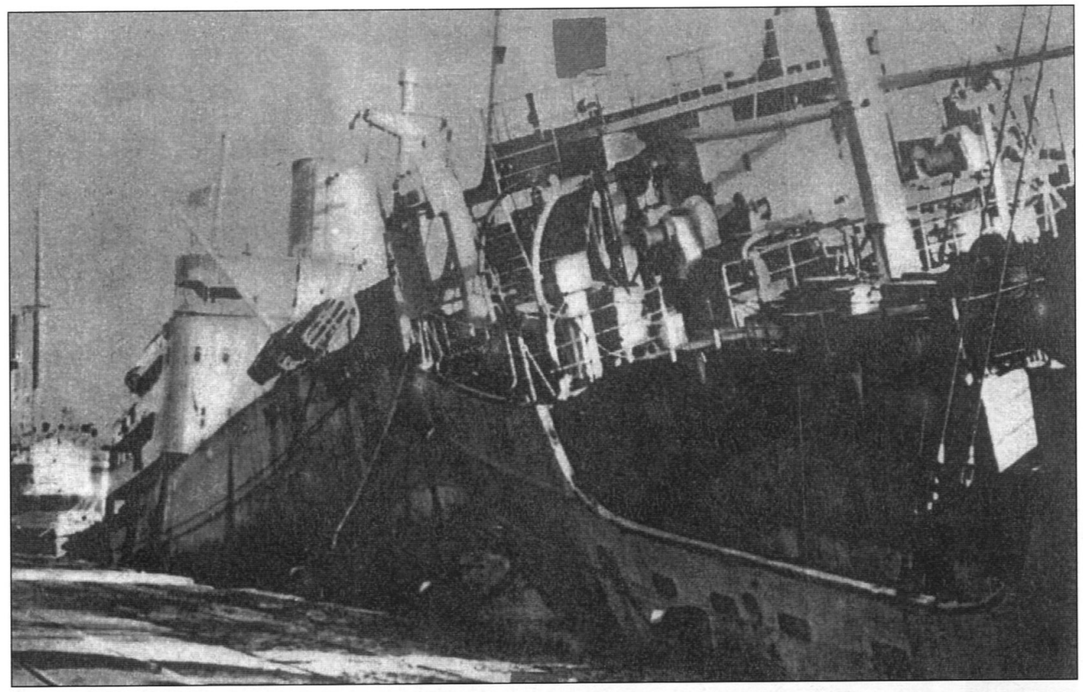
Sketch from the operational report showing the four vessels mined by Hasler and Sparks. We have added the names of the ships. Hasler: 'Owing to the necessity for a late start it was not possible to examine more than half the length of the target area before the tide began to ebb and it became impossible to proceed any further in silence. While *Catfish* was a little distance from the side of the Sperrbrecher in the act of turning to go downstream, we were seen by a sentry on deck, who shone a torch on us. Fortunately we were able to get back close to the ship's side and drift along with the tide without making any movement. The sentry followed us along the deck, shining his torch down on us at intervals, but was evidently unable to make up his mind as to what we actually were, owing to the efficiency of the camouflage scheme. We were able to get into a position under the bow of the ship where he could no longer see us, and after waiting there for about five minutes everything seemed quiet, so we resumed our course downstream.'

The crew of *Crayfish*: Corporal Albert Laver *(left)* **and Marine William Mills** *(right).*

Early the next morning the limpets started to explode. At 0700 the first mines detonated on the freighter *Alabama* at Bassens South and mines continued to go off until 1300 hours. Five of the six mined ships were badly damaged. At Quai Carnot, the freighter *Dresden* filled with water, causing its stern to sink to the bottom of the river; the tanker *Cap Hadid* was badly holed and damaged by fire; and the freighter *Tannenfels* was also holed which caused it to list although the Germans managed to prevent it from capsizing. The fourth ship at Quai Carnot, the Sperrbrecher No. 5 (formerly the *Schwanheim*), was not damaged, its limpets having fallen off and exploded on the river bed without inflicting any harm to the ship. At Bassens South, two holes were blown in the *Alabama* which caused water to penetrate through hatches 4 and 5, and the cargo liner *Portland* suffered one hole, which caused a limited amount of water to penetrate. (Ironically, an SOE-controlled Resistance group happened to be reconnoitring the dockside at Bordeaux for a sabotage attack on enemy shipping, planned for the next night, only to see their prospective targets sunk by Hasler's limpet mines before their very eyes!)

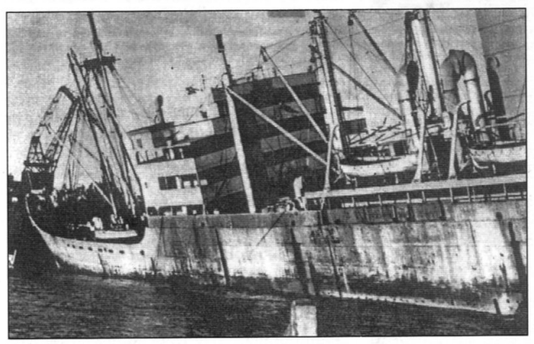


Above: ***Crayfish*** **initially proceeded along the east bank of the river to the docks on that side of Bordeaux but without encountering any suitable targets. By then the ebb tide had begun to turn against them, so Laver and Mills decided to turn back and attack the two ships moored alongside the Bassens South which they had observed during the day. They placed five limpets on the large cargo ship and three on the smaller cargo liner. They did not see any German sentries or patrols during the attack. Again we have added the names of the ships attacked to the sketch.** *Right:* **The quay at Bassens South where *Alabama* and *Portland* were berthed. Just behind the photographer's position, stands the huge Pont d'Aquitaine which carries the E5/A630, part of Bordeaux's ring road, across the Garonne (see centre pages). The view is downstream. (Port de Bordeaux)**

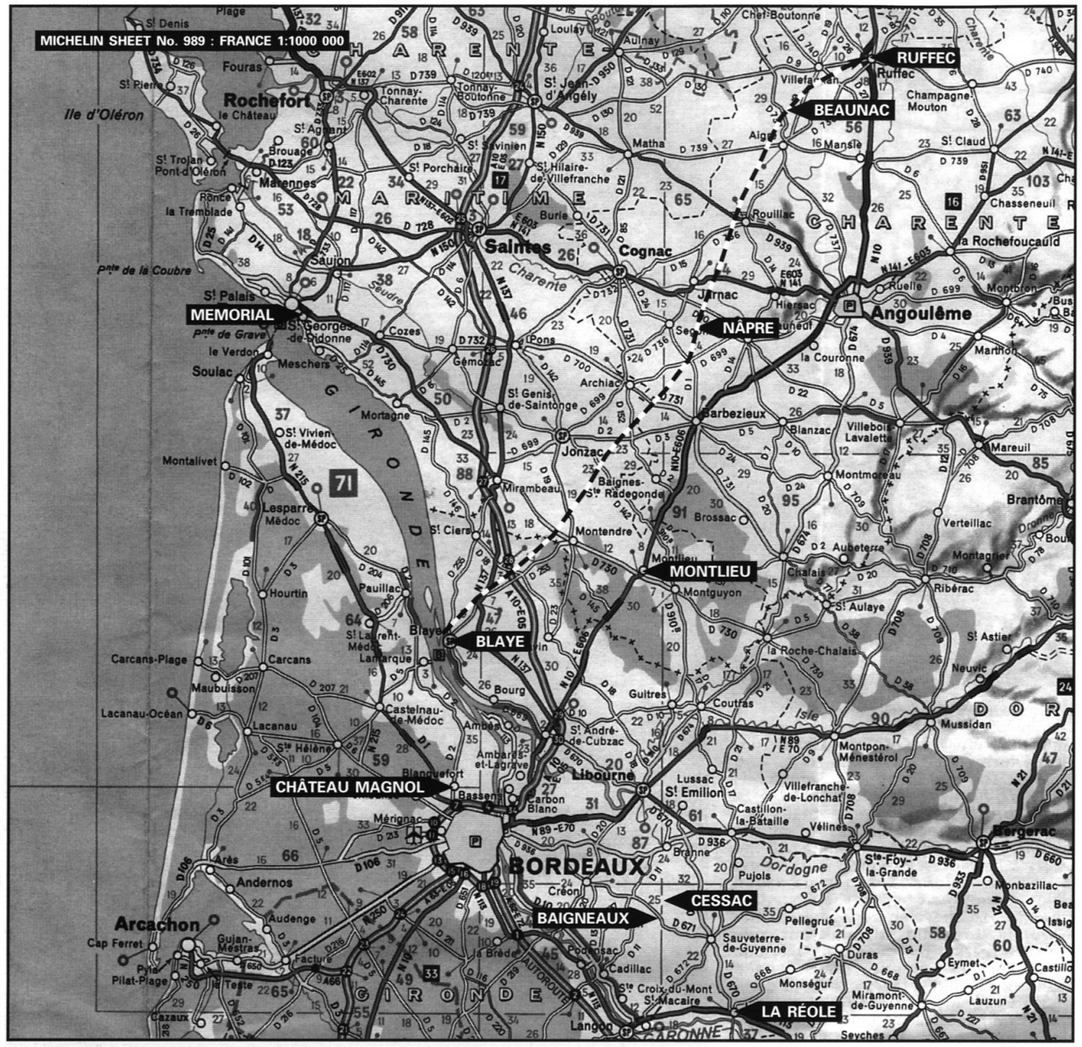


The morning after. These are the only known pictures of the damaged ships. This one shows two of the blockade runners which were targeted by Hasler and Sparks. The one in front is *Tannenfels* and lying further back is the *Dresden*. In terms of enemy shipping actually put out of the war or cargo destroyed, the results of the raid were meagre. All the ships attacked were empty at the time of the explosions. The five damaged ships were holed below the waterline but, due to the shallow water of the Garonne, they did not sink but only came to rest on the river bed. Only one ship capsized but with the damaged side up, making repairs easy. All damage was reported as being slight and divers immediately began repairing the underwater holes. In fact the *Dresden* and *Tannenfels*, which were partially sunken, were temporarily sealed so successfully that they were floated on the next high tide. *Portland* had only one hole through which little water penetrated and it too was soon provisionally sealed. Most ships spent some time in dry dock for further repairs.

Quai Carnot today. The ship in the picture is the cruiser *Colbert*, the post-war replacement for its namesake sunk at Toulon in 1942 (see *After the Battle* No. 76). Carnot is the name of the riverside quay, the parallel street on the town side being known as Quai de Bacalan. The ships were anchored right in front of Shed No. 12. (Port de Bordeaux)



The view looking upstream then . . . and now. Sheds Nos. 1-13 on Quai Carnot have all been demolished. (Port de Bordeaux)



Three of the crews embarked on an overland escape. The route taken by Hasler and Sparks led from Blaye to Ruffec. Laver and Mills, who also started out from near Blaye, were arrested at Montlieu. MacKinnon and Conway were caught at La Réole.

THE ESCAPE OF HASLER AND SPARKS

Catfish and *Crayfish* continued downstream for another few kilometres until they were just north of Blaye, where they separated at 0600 and made for the shore about 400 metres apart. Hasler and Sparks landed and scuttled their canoe. Throughout the operation they had paddled 170 kilometres (105 miles) and now it was time to walk.

As was the plan, they headed for Ruffec anticipating that the Resistance would be waiting for them but in actual fact they were not expecting them at all as the message announcing the canoeists' imminent arrival had not got through. 'Marie-Claire', the Comtesse de Milleville, the conduit through whom this message should have been passed shortly before the operation, did not have a wireless link with London and moreover was in hospital with five broken ribs following a car accident (which some say was the result of work of Nazi collaborators).

The escapers all carried elementary escape kits consisting of silk maps and a number of minute compasses, plus a few emergency rations mostly saved out of their main ration issue. They had the choice of evading in uniform and of being treated as prisoners of war if captured or travelling in civilian attire and being shot out of hand as spies. However civilian clothes greatly reduced the risk of recognition and capture. Hasler and Sparks started out in their uniforms but, after the first two nights travelling only in darkness to avoid detection, Hasler decided it was time for a change. On the morning of December 13, cold, wet and hungry, they were given a hat and a beret by a courageous farming family near Reignac, continuing on their way looking just a little less conspicuous. They were not always so lucky and on several occasions their requests for help were brusquely refused. However, these occasions were more than compensated for by others when a great deal of help was given: by a woman who gave them jackets and trousers; by another woman who gave them a leg of chicken, bread, and advice on the location of German troops. They were in desperate need of shelter, after eight days of living in the open, in bitter winter weather, when the wonderfully generous Clodomir Pasqueraud and his wife Irène at Nâpre Farm near St Preuil, let them sleep in their house and fed them well with their first hot meal since leaving the submarine. Before leaving the Pasquereaus, they promised that when they were home in England, they would send a message via the BBC: 'Le poulet est bon' (The chicken is good).

The next day, December 16, Hasler and Sparks continued north and by December 17 were near Beaunac where, after three point-blank refusals, they were taken into his farm by Monsieur André Latouche. During the night the French police were seen to be approaching, having heard that there were Englishmen in the area so they had to make a hurried departure and continue their long walk to Ruffec. A few days later the Germans arrested a number of residents of Beaunac. Several of them were subsequently released, but Lucien Gody, Maurice Rousseau and René Rousseau were all deported and never returned.

By now they had not only canoed 105 miles but had walked an additional 100 miles and, although they were tired and hungry, they were nearly at their destination.

As they entered Ruffec they fully expected to be met by representatives of the Resistance. When this did not happen they were at a loss to know what to do but luck was on their side. They inspected all the local bars and bistros before they found one which seemed quiet and inconspicuous where they could purchase a simple meal without the requirement for ration cards. By good fortune they had chosen the Café des Sports, run by René Mandinaud and his sister Yvonne. Hasler and Sparks sat at a table and ordered bowls of soup. When it came time to pay Hasler passed Yvonne a message folded inside a 500 franc note. It said: 'We are escaping English soldiers. Do you know anyone who can help us?' She gave no sign that she had seen the message and continued her work, but later brought a note to Hasler telling him to stay in the restaurant when it closed. They were well fed, washed and given a good bed, and interrogated at length by the local Resistance. Once they were satisfied with their credentials, they were taken into the very capable hands of the Ruffec Resistance, whose network would govern their every movement until they reached Spain.

The farmstead at Nâpre near St Preuil where Hasler and Sparks were given refuge by Monsieur and Madame Pasqueraud. The farm is one of the few points on the escape route which can be positively associated with Hasler and Sparks. The present occupants, Michel and Dany Landreau, unaware of its history, converted the extensive outbuildings into a comfortable modern home. The simple 'one up, one down' cottage in the middle remains unaltered and will be preserved in its present form. The farm is not open to the public.

The Café des Sports in Ruffec where the owners, René Mandinaud and his sister Yvonne, were able to put Hasler and Sparks in touch with the Resistance. Renamed after the war Toque Blanche and, later, Le Baroque, the cafe is now closed.

Armand and Amélie Dubreuille at their farm at Marvaux where they sheltered Hasler and Sparks while awaiting contact with Mary Lindell of the 'Mary-Claire' escape network. Pictured by François Boisnier in May 2000.

Their first move took them to the farm of Armand Dubreuille at Marvaud, a member of the 'Marie-Claire' escape organisation, where they expected to stay overnight. However, due to Marie-Claire's injuries, they had to stay put until the New Year. On January 29, 1943 they were collected by her elder son Maurice to be taken to her flat in Lyon, but before leaving the Dubreuilles they again promised to have a message on their safe arrival in England relayed over the BBC: 'The two chickens have arrived'. (Both messages were eventually sent in late April 1943.)

They remained a month in Lyon, first at Marie-Claire's flat and later in another house, before travelling by train to Marseille, and, finally on March 1, to Perpignan. Then followed a gruelling trek over the Pyrenees, from Ceret on the French side to Banolas on the Spanish side. From there they travelled to Barcelona, where they contacted the British Consul. Hasler was taken to Madrid and flown back to the UK, arriving on April 1. Sparks went to Gibraltar before returning by sea. Hasler was awarded the DSO and Sparks the DSM.

Mary Lindell, here pictured at a post-war reunion with Hasler (left) and Sparks (right), ran a very successful escape line from occupied France across the Pyrenees to Spain. Born in Surrey in 1895, impeccably English in upbringing and manner, she had lived for many years in France and as the Comtesse de Milleville held a position in Parisian society. Arrested by the Gestapo for her underground work, she escaped to Britain via Spain, arriving back by Lysander on October 21, 1942 to resume leadership of her organisation. Lack of a wireless operator prevented her from knowing of 'Frankton' in advance, and when London did try to contact her, the message did not get through because she was in hospital recovering from injuries suffered in a car accident. As a result of the mix-up, she was waiting for the expected escapees at the wrong place. Her 19-year-old son Maurice took the two men in charge and hid them in a safe house in Lyon. The countess's first action on meeting Hasler at Lyon was to hand him her nail-scissors and order him to remove his magnificent blond moustache!

Right: **Perhaps the most poignant reminder of the operation is the bullet-scarred wall near the remains of the German HQ bunker at Château Magnol (also known as the Château du Dehez) near Blanquefort, just north of Bordeaux, where Sergeant Wallace and Marine Ewart — the first crew to be captured — were executed by a German firing-squad in the early hours of December 12.**

THE OTHERS

By then, the other eight men who had embarked on the mission were all dead.

Moffatt of *Conger*, who had been dropped off together with Sheard, was discovered drowned on the beach at Bois en Ré on the Ile de Ré on December 14 but Sheard's body was never found.

Wallace and Ewart of *Coalfish*, who had disappeared at the first tide race, had actually survived this first hazard. They had capsized near the Pointe de Grave lighthouse and had been captured, in uniform. They were interrogated but gave away nothing of their secret mission, insisting that they were naval men who had been washed overboard from their ship. However, the Germans (whose shore radar had already picked up the surfacing of *Tuna* earlier) discovered their wrecked canoe, and late on December 10 the German command warned its units that a saboteur party had been caught near the mouth of the Gironde. Troops were put on alert and spotter planes sent up to reconnoitre the river. Admiral Julius Bachmann, the Kommandeur Atlantikküste (Commander Atlantic Coast) of Marinegruppenkommando West, obeying Hitler's infamous Kommandobefehl (Commando Order) of October 18, 1942, ordered that Wallace and Ewart be shot. The execution was carried out by a Kriegsmarine firing party under Leutnant Theodor Prahm near the German HQ bunker at Château Magnol, outside Bordeaux, just after midnight on the early morning of December 12, 1942.

MacKinnon and Conway of *Cuttlefish*, who had become separated from the others at Le Verdon, had actually continued up the Gironde. They too had spent their third day (December 10) on the Ile de Cazeau, unaware that Hasler and his party were hiding on the same island only a few hundred yards away. On the night of December 10/11, on their last run to the target, their canoe was wrecked on an obstacle in the river.

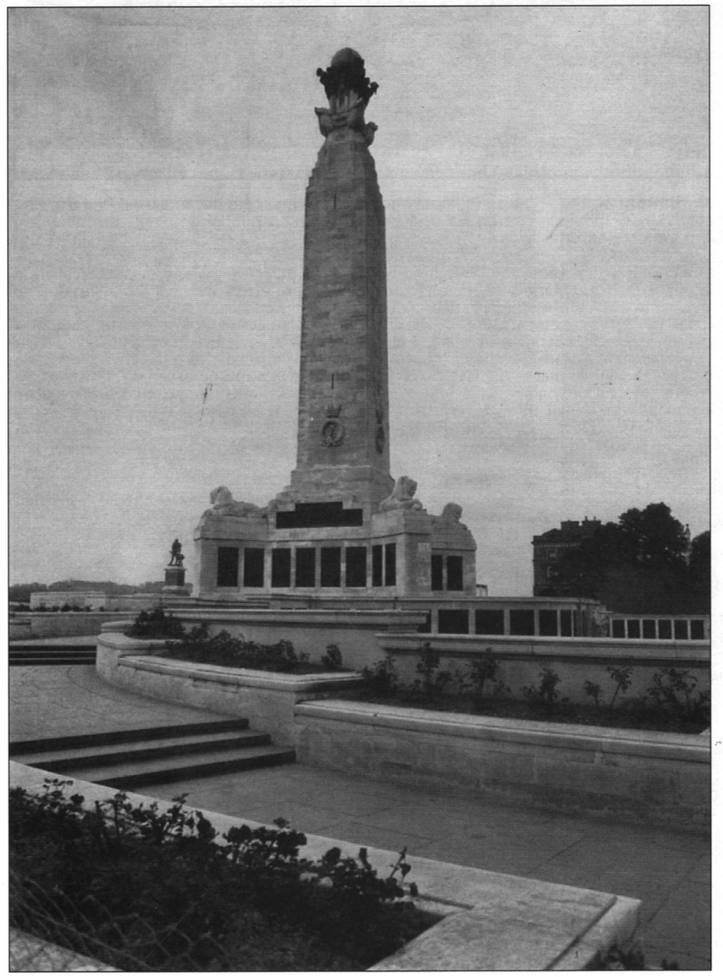
Having struggled ashore they made their way across country until a Spanish labourer, Edouard Pariente, came across James Conway, who was dressed in civilian clothes and begging for help. Being too poor to offer any accommodation he asked a fellow worker, Monsieur Pouget, to take care of Conway. He did not see MacKinnon who probably showed up shortly after they separated. On the way they were joined by Monsieur Cheyraud, on the road from Baigneaux to Cessac, where they were sheltered for three days by Louis and Louise Jaubert. They were arrested by French gendarmes on December 18 near La Réole as they waited to board a train in the direction of the Pyrenees, and handed over to the Germans. (Records at La Réole hospital that show that they were admitted on December 29 are thought to be a cover-up by the Vichy authorities though it is possible that MacKinnon was seen by a doctor there.) They were shot on March 23, 1943. The reason why they were kept alive for so long is almost certainly because the Germans wanted to know who helped them in France, but they gave away nothing. German records show that they knew all they wanted about Operation 'Frankton' by January 4, 1943.

Laver and Mills of *Crayfish*, having completed the attack with Hasler, also made their way across country heading for Ruffec. They walked for two days, covering 30 kilometres. They were betrayed and picked up by the French police, still in uniform, at La Garde, a suburb of Montlieu, 30 kilometres north-east of Blaye. They were handed over to the Germans and were also shot on March 23 — the same day that MacKinnon and Conway met their end.

Hasler and Sparks at Château Magnol during one of the annual commemoration ceremonies.

The crew of *Cuttlefish*: Lieutenant John MacKinnon *(left)* and Marine James Conway *(right)*. Having lost contact with the others on the first night, they carried on by themselves for another three nights only to see their Cockle wrecked on an obstacle during their last run-in to the attack. They too tried to escape on foot but instead of going north-east towards Ruffec, as instructed, they went south-east. After a few days they had reached the village of Baigneaux (see the map on page 18).

Louis Jaubert of Cessac who took MacKinnon and Conway into his home. Despite help from the Resistance, the two men were arrested at La Réole on December 18, taken to Bordeaux and shot by the Germans on March 23, 1943.



None of the eight men who died on the raid have known graves but they are commemorated at the Naval Memorials in Britain. After the First World War, an appropriate way had to be found of commemorating those members of the Royal Navy who had no known grave, the majority of deaths having occured at sea where no permanent memorial could be provided. An Admiralty committee recommended that the three manning ports in Great Britain — Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth — should each have an identical memorial of unmistakable naval form, an obelisk, which would serve as a leading mark for shipping. The memorials were designed by Sir Robert Lorimer, who had already carried out a considerable amount of work for the Commission, with sculpture by Henry Poole. After the Second World War it was decided that the naval memorials should be extended to provide space for commemorating the naval dead without graves of that war. The Naval Memorial at Plymouth stands on the north side of the Hoe, in a fitting place between the statue of Drake and the Armada Memorial. The 1939-45 war dead are commemorated on bronze panels set in a long curved wall of Portland stone which borders a sunken garden a few feet below. The 1914-18 War Memorial was unveiled by HRH Prince George (later Duke of Kent) in 1924 and the Extension by HRH Princess Margaret 30 years later. Additional panels, honouring those who died ashore but have no known grave, were unveiled by Admiral Sir Mark Pizey on November 11, 1956. Here are commemorated six of the missing from Operation 'Frankton': the crew of the *Conger,* Marine David Moffatt on Panel 103 of Column 1 and Corporal George Sheard on Panel 74 of Column 3; Marine Robert Ewart of *Coalfish* on Panel 103, Column 1; Marine James Conway of *Cuttlefish* on Panel 102, Column 3; and the *Crayfish* crew, Corporal Albert Laver (Panel 102, Column 3) and Marine William Mills (Panel 103, Column 1). Sergeant Samuel Wallace (*Coalfish*) and Lieutenant John MacKinnon (*Cuttlefish*) are recorded on the memorial at their manning port of Portsmouth.

TEN DARING MEN-AND A FEAT THAT THRILLED THE WORLD!
JOSÉ FERRER TREVOR HOWARD
COCKLESHELL HEROES
Colour by TECHNICOLOR
A WARWICK PRODUCTION · A COLUMBIA PICTURE

The Bordeaux raid really captured the admiration of the general public with the release of the *Cockleshell Heroes* movie in 1955. Most people today think that the film was based on Lucas Phillips' book of the same title but in actual fact the film came first, the book not being published until the following year.

THE FILM

The 1955 movie *Cockleshell Heroes* is popular and still regularly shown on television but bears little resemblance to the original story as it shows frogmen sinking a German battleship and being rescued by the Resistance. A modest man, Hasler was embarrassed by both the title and the script (the screenplay was written by Bryan Forbes and Richard Maibaum) and, although he had been the film's chief technical advisor, contrived to be out of the country when the film was premiered at the Empire Leicester Square, London, in 1955.

Produced by Warwick and released by Columbia Pictures, and photographed in CinemaScope and Technicolor, the film was directed by José Ferrer, who himself played one of the leading roles as 'Major Stringer' (all the characters in the movies being given fictitious names). The other stars were Trevor Howard (as Captain Thompson), Anthony Newley (Clarke) and Dora Bryan (Myrtle).

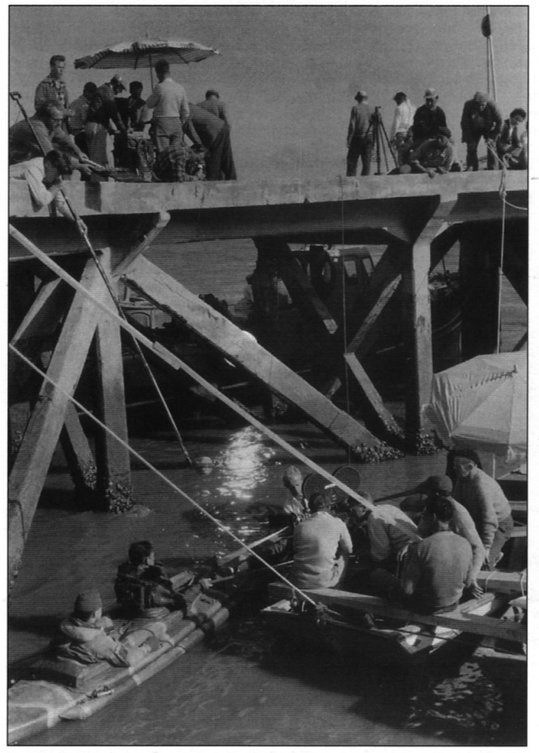
The authorities gave much help in the making of the film, providing a submarine, drill instructors, and Special Boat Service (SBS) canoeists, together with facilities at Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth. Royal Marines played many small parts in the film — drivers of staff cars, German troops and sailors, sentries (both German and British), military policemen, even the German firing-squad. Trevor Howard and José Ferrer were popular, and the latter remained friendly with Hasler for years.

Filming took place at Shepperton Studios, the Tagus river in Portugal being used as a substitute for the Gironde, with further scenes shot in London docks, and at Eastney. In the scene in the Officers' Mess dining room at Eastney (now the Mountbatten Room in the Royal Marines Museum), where Trevor Howard and Jose Ferrer are drinking alone, the ancient mess servant appears and exits through a door in the corner of the room — which in reality leads to the gents' toilet!

Capt 'Dickie' Brounger led a party of 12 SBS in Portugal and one of them, John Walter, then fresh out of training, remembers being paid 10 guineas a week location allowance – very welcome for a corporal on £5 a week! He also remembers frequent rapid changes of uniform as the changing weather altered the filming programme. It was also fortunate they were on hand when Trevor Howard and actor David Lodge (Ruddock) were saved from drowning when their canoe capsized.

Hasler and Sparks were both engaged as technical advisors on the film, actually training the actors in the art of paddling. Here they pose (in the boat on the left) for a publicity shot with actors David Lodge and Trevor Howard in *Coalfish*.

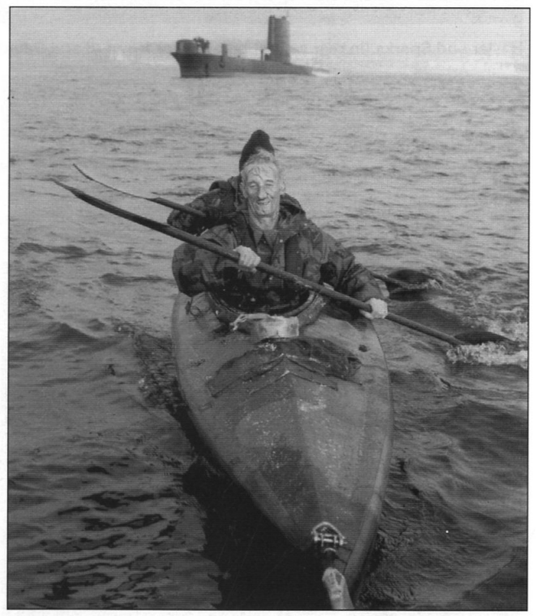
Hasler and Sparks (in rear canoe) take Trevor Howard and David Lodge (foreground) for a practice run on location in Portugal.



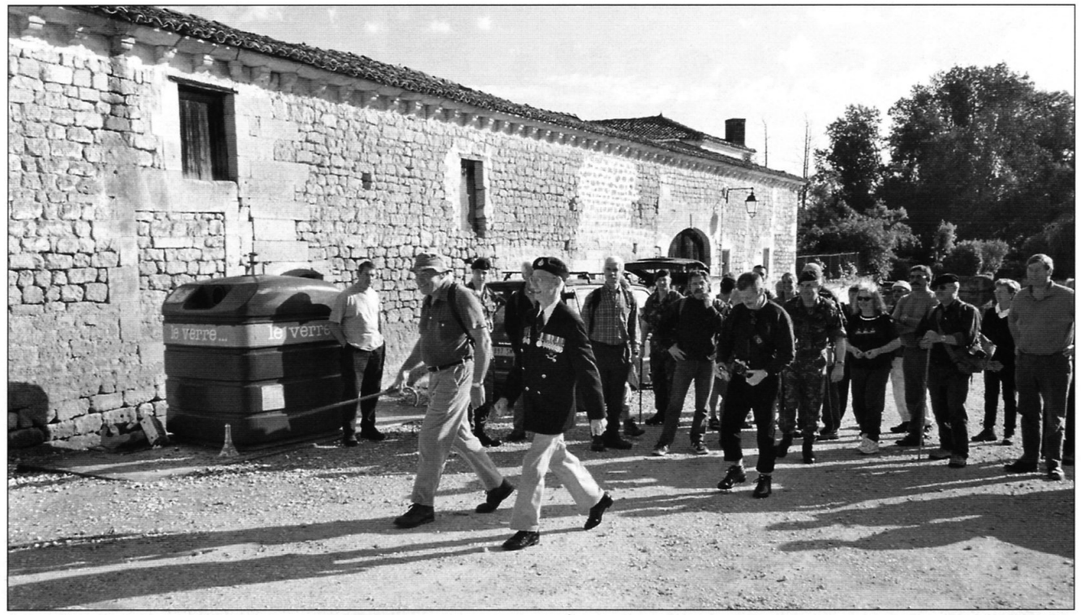
Filming on location on the Tagus river in Portugal.

A huge model set was erected at Shepperton Studios for the sequence showing the blowing up of the cargo ships. *Above:* **Preparing the pyrotechnics.** *Below:* **Putting out the flames.**

The first memorial honouring the men of Operation 'Frankton' was erected at St Georges de Didonne, at the mouth of the Gironde across the river from Le Verdon (see map on page 18). Pierre Bonneaud pictured it for us in September 2002.



Left: **It was not until 1984 that a memorial to Operation 'Frankton' was erected in Britain, financed by public subscription. It stands within the perimeter of 1 Assault Group Royal Marines at Hamworthy, near Poole in Dorset. Hasler (left) and Sparks (right) attended the opening ceremony. Hasler died on May 5, 1987, leaving Bill Sparks as the last surviving member of the Cockleshell Heroes.** *Right:* **Since the war, Bill Sparks has returned to canoeing several times. This picture of him in a Klepper kayak paddling away from HMS *Narwhal* was taken in 1976. In June 1983, then aged 60, Sparks relived part of his wartime exploit when he paddled 60 miles up the Gironde in a Cockle replica together with Gerry Lockyer, curator of the Imperial War Museum, as his No. 2. Starting out from Royan at the mouth of the river, they covered the distance in four days, stopping each evening at a pre-arranged place where they were met by Sparks' daughter Gilian and son-in-law Michael in their motorised caravan. Crowds of people applauded Sparks as he arrived in Bordeaux, stepping on to the jetty to be greeted by the Mayor, Jacques Chaban-Delmas (himself a former Resistance hero), and other French veterans. Said Sparks: 'The currents were pretty swift and at one time we had to battle for two and a half hours in the surf. Although it was much more dangerous during those nights we paddled 40 years ago, we at least got the tides right and were not nearly so weary as we were this time.'**



In the run-up to the 60th anniversary of the raid in December 2002, the Franco-British organisation Frankton Souvenir opened the Frankton Trail, a 100-mile walking route retracing the escape of Hasler and Sparks from Blaye to Ruffec (see map page 18). The trail was formally opened on June 12, 2002, when six parties of mixed French and British walkers — including Bill Sparks and a Royal Marines delegation led by Brigadier Nick Pounds, commander of the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines — walked different sections of 10-12 kilometres of the route, meeting up for a communal picnic at Barret. Here, Sparks, 80, sets a cracking pace leading the group departing from Saintonge with St Preuil as its destination.

60 YEARS ON

In 1999, a former French para officer, François Boisnier, set up the organisation 'Frankton Souvenir' to perpetuate the story of the raid. In particular it aims to preserve the memory of the lives lost, both French and English, and acknowledge the debt owed to the courageous French folk who helped the raiders. This organisation has now expanded, with both French and British members on its organising committee, and has the enthusiastic support of Bagheera — the old comrades association of 11ème BPC (Bataillon Parachutiste de Choc) whose members attend every ceremony connected with Operation 'Frankton' in France. Boisnier and Raymond Muelle are currently writing a book on the raid, the first since Lucas Phillips' *Cockleshell Heroes* of the 1950s.

An interesting idea fostered by 'Frankton Souvenir', rather than build another memorial, is to develop a 100-mile-long walking trail that follows the route taken by Hasler and Sparks from Blaye near Bordeaux, where they abandoned their canoe, to Ruffec, the town where they finally contacted the Resistance. It is hoped that a walking trail with an interesting story will be a successful way of keeping the memory of the raid alive. Indeed two British holiday companies — Waymark Walking Holidays and Holts Battlefield Tours — will feature it in their brochures next year. The route will be signposted and will have explanatory plaques telling the story, in French and English, at key points.

Copying the tactic used by Hasler and Sparks in 1942, the trail makes use of tracks, paths and quiet backroads, avoiding all towns and large villages. All pictures of the opening day were taken by Royal Navy photographer, CPO George Tweedie.

A group shot near St Même les Carrières. Both our authors are in the picture: in the centre, furthest back between the two Royal Marines, is Brigadier Tony Hunter-Choat and kneeling on the right is Royal Marines historian Major Mark Bentinck.

The path was officially opened by Bill Sparks, the last surviving member of the team, in June 2002. Frankton Souvenir organised some 150 French and English walkers to walk sections of the route, followed by a rendezvous at the cottage at Nâpre where the first plaque was unveiled. A celebratory dinner rounded off the day.

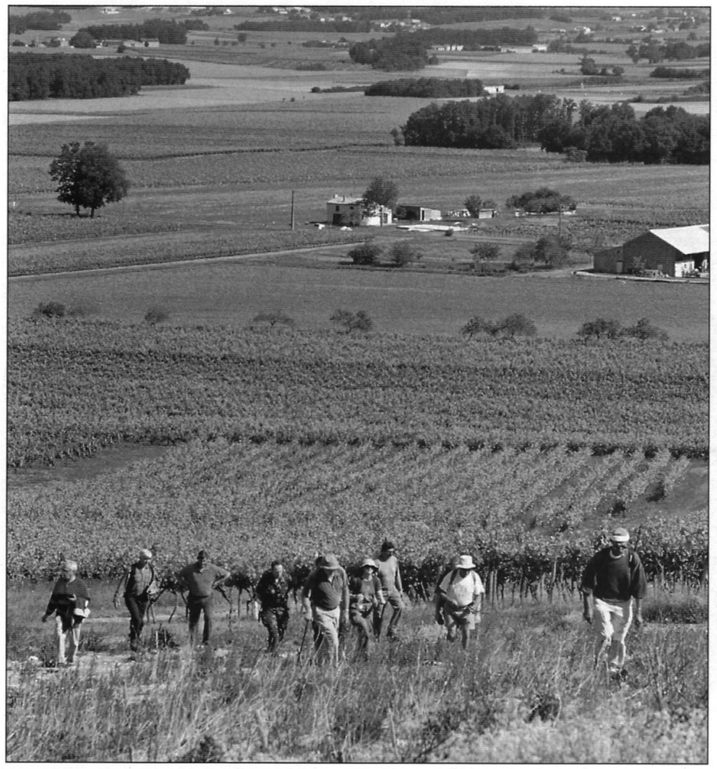
The outline plan for the 60th anniversary celebrations this year in the Bordeaux area are as follows:

December 11: ceremony at St Georges de Didonne, at the mouth of the Gironde, where there is a memorial to Operation 'Frankton'.

December 12: ceremony at Château Magnol at Blanquefort, location of the former Kriegsmarine HQ bunker, and site of the execution of Wallace and Ewart. Naming of a new quay at Bordeaux in honour of the raid (to be confirmed). HRH The Duke of Kent will be present.

December 13: march into Ruffec, and unveiling of a plaque at the Café des Sports (Le Baroque Cafe).

For details of the 'Frankton' walking trail send an SAE, plus four first-class stamps, to Mark Bentinck, Cleeves, Godshill Wood, Fordingbridge, Hants, SP6 2LR, Great Britain. Those interested in the organised tours can contact Waymark (phone 01753 516477) or Holts Battlefield Tours (phone 01304 612248).



The Frankton Trail winds its way through the pleasant countryside of three départements — Gironde, Charente-Maritime and Charente.

Frankton Souvenir has produced a bronze medallion to commemorate the operation of 60 years ago. Of very high quality, weighing some 150 grams (5 oz) it can be obtained from Guy Celle, 32 Route de Chez Guinot, 17520 St Eugene, France. The cost (incl p&p) is 30 Euros, which should be sent in cash, by registered mail.

After the picnic all participants moved to Nâpre to unveil a plaque at the farmhouse where Hasler and Sparks found their first refuge. Here members of Bagheera (ex-11th French Para) and serving Royal Marines pose with Sparks at the house. Standing in centre, next to Sparks, is François Boisnier, president of Frankton Souvenir. Brigadier Pounds is fourth from right.

The last surviving Cockleshell Hero inspects the new plaque.

THE TRIALS OF FLYING OFFICER KOSH

Early on Saturday morning, July 1, 1944, a Tempest of No. 3 Squadron piloted by Flying Officer George Kosh took off from RAF Newchurch — one of several temporary airstrips which had been established along the south coast — to try to intercept V1s which were being launched at Britain from France. The speed of the Tempest enabled the aircraft to catch up with the flying bombs at which point the missile could be destroyed either by gun-fire or flipping the wing of the V1 to make it crash in open countryside. Shortly after 5.30 a.m., while chasing a flying bomb, the Tempest entered low cloud only to emerge a few minutes later in a steep dive. The pilot failed to bale out and the Tempest crashed at Winchelsea.

A team from No. 49 Maintenance Unit at RAF Faygate, the unit responsible for investigating crashes in Kent and Sussex (see *After the Battle* No. 34), attended the site on July 12 to recover the pilot although other RAF officers are reported to have removed partial remains on the day of the crash. If a crash occurs at high speed — as was this one — it would inevitably mean that the remains would only be fragmentary but it had been laid down that if at least seven pounds could be recovered, a burial could go ahead.

Flying Officer Kosh's burial in a private grave (No. 917 in Section B of Plot JJ) in Folkestone Cemetery took place on July 5 although No. 49 MU did not start digging until July 12. The cockpit was recovered although, without heavy lifting gear, the MU had to leave the huge Napier Sabre engine in situ. The local ARP Warden, a Mr Collins, also found human remains scattered on the surface which he buried nearby. (To avoid unnecessary upset with the next of kin, it was unwritten policy to rebury any remains found subsequent to a funeral back at the crash site, as happened with the loss of the Avro York which killed Air Chief Marshal Leigh Mallory and his crew — see *After the Battle* No. 39.)

After the Protection of Military Remains Act came into force in 1986, licences to excavate crash sites were only granted by the Ministry of Defence if they were satisfied that the pilot had been recovered at the time or that no partial human remains were on site, the appropriate MOD department having the benefit of being able to refer to the original casualty file on the airman concerned. In the case of Tempest JN765, as Flying Officer Kosh had a grave at Hawkinge, the application by Andy Saunders in September 1995 to excavate the crash site was approved.

C.A.251.

DIV. REF. /439/44 H.Q. REF. RAF/250/62/44

CRASHED AIRCRAFT REPORT

Parish ICKLESHAM.. Sussex. Date 1st July, 1944. Time 05.45. hours.

Exact Location House Field, Winchelsea Marsh, parish of Icklesham, Sussex.

Map Reference 347367/135.

British, Allied or Enemy British. Type TEMPEST No. J.N.65.

Condition of Machine Total wreck.

CREW

Killed One. Seriously Injured --- Slightly Injured --- Unhurt ---

Not traced

Disposal of Crew

Which R.A.F. Station notified

Time and Date of notification

Flying Officer George Kosh *(top left)* **died on Saturday, July 1, 1944 when his Hawker Tempest JN765** *(top right)* **— incorrectly stated as JN65 on the report** *(above)* **— crashed near the Sussex coast during an early morning sortie to attack approaching flying bombs. The Germans had begun their V-weapon campaign against Britain just over two weeks previously, and one of the counter-measures was to use the speed of the Tempest to overhaul the pilotless craft and shoot it down. The reason for George Kosh's crash could not be established with certainty but who could have foreseen that *exactly* 58 years later a man would stand trial consequent upon investigating the crash site.**

Detail of Occurrence

At 05.45. hours on 1st July, 1944, a TEMPEST fighter plane, Piloted by Flying/Officer George COSH, age 22 years, of 3 Squadron, 150 Wing R.A.F., Folkestone, Kent, crashed at House Field, Winchelsea Marsh, parish of Icklesham, Map reference 347367/135, at a point approximately one and half miles due north of New Winchelsea Road, Winchelsea. The fusilage was shattered to pieces and strewn over a radius of 300 yards, while the engine and cockpit buried itself in the ground. The pilot was buried with the engine, with the exception of one leg which was found near the crater. This leg has been handed over to Flight Lieutenant G.M. Carstairs of the same Squadron, who with other R.A.F. personnel are digging for the remains of the dead pilot.

No damage to property. No casualties.

The following services attended - Rye Rescue party - Police and Rye N.F.S.

A guard was maintained by the police until relieved by a section of 2749 Squadron, R.A.F. Newchurch, under Sq[illegible]on Leader Wood.

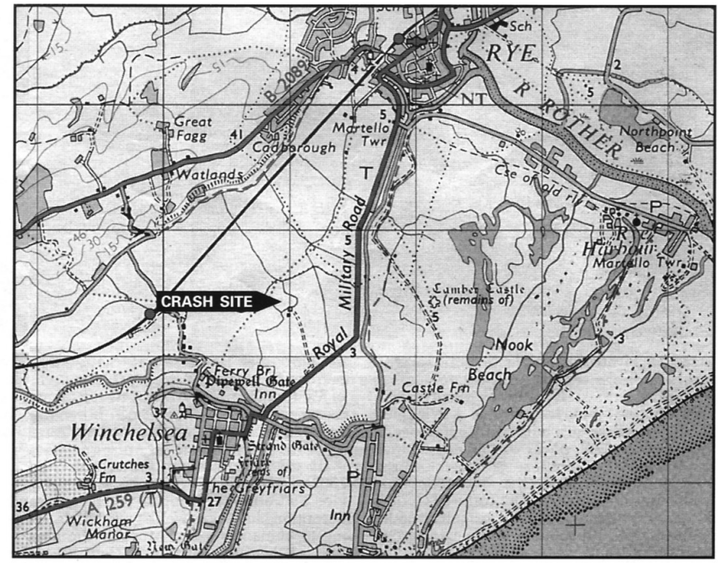
Time and Date information received by Police 05.50. hours - 1st July, 1944.

Signature J. Balcombe Sgt.25.

The actual date of the approval is in dispute, but Mr Saunders went ahead having been given a verbal assurance by telephone that the licence had been issued and was on its way. In the event, when the document was received, it came into force some days after the excavation had taken place on the 23rd putting him in technical breach of the law.

There matters may have rested but in September 2000 the Ministry of Defence Casualty Branch received a letter from Anthony Rogers, who had attended the dig and had taken photos, stating that the pilot's torso and head had been found but were reburied. The MOD, who were already compiling a file on suspected breaches of the Act (like the Mustang recovery at Southend reported in issue 99), were informed and Mr Saunders was arrested by the MOD Police on June 28, 2001. The discrepancy with the date of the licence was pointed out and items retained by him were seized. Because the recovery had taken place prior to the date on the licence, the police took the line that the excavation was illegal; therefore theft of MOD property had taken place. After being taken to Hastings Police Station, and spending several hours in the cells over two days, Mr Saunders was charged with not only breaches of the Act, including tampering with human remains without licence, but theft, deception, and forgery, and bailed to appear in Hastings Magistrates Court on July 31. No plea to any of the charges was entered at the time of that hearing.

Over the following months, the MOD Police carried out an extensive investigation. All items recovered from the Tempest that



The Tempest crashed not far from the Royal Military Road, constructed to provide for the rapid transport of troops behind the 30-foot-wide canal dug as an anti-invasion measure in 1806 — France then being the enemy! The airstrip at Newchurch, from where Flying Officer Kosh took off, lies some 12 miles to the north-east on the Romney Marsh in Kent.

Once a crash was reported, a medical officer would supervise a preliminary dig for the pilot. Only then would the salvage party be ordered in. The men from No. 49 Maintenance Unit had to work without the aid of mechanical plant, their main task being to try to salvage the huge Napier Sabre engine. Reg Walter was fortunate to have procured some film for his box camera — this is his picture of his mates taking a breather. 'From the photograph it can be seen that there was wreckage strewn around the field comprising mostly of the fuselage, wings and tail. It was our practice to wait until there was sufficient wreckage before calling in the low-loaders. The plane was totally written off with no salvageable items being recovered. RAF Faygate [see *After the Battle* No. 34] dealt with the scrap.' The team dug the site from July 12 to 18 during which time no further human remains were discovered. After reaching a depth of some 15 feet the excavation was becoming dangerous and had to be aborted.

In September 1995 a team led by Andy Saunders of the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum re-investigated the crash site *(left)*. **He had applied for a licence under the Protection of Military Remains Act but the excavation was carried out a few days prior to the licence being received, technically in breach of the law.** *Right:* **This panel, stencilled with the serial number, was confiscated by the police during their 2001 investigation. (P. Burgess)**

were in private collections or on display in museums were either seized or impounded. The crash site at Winchelsea was re-excavated but no 'torso' or 'head in a flying helmet' as had been claimed in Mr Rogers' statement to the police, was found. A small quantity of fragmentary bones recovered were sent for DNA analysis but an absolute match was not possible. The coffin of George Kosh was exhumed from the cemetery under Home Office licence and his remains cross-checked with DNA samples given by the family. We understand that the exhumation was strongly deplored by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which made its position known to the MOD. Statements were taken from over 40 people and, at one stage, the MOD Police had more than ten officers working on the case. All told, the investigation cost in excess of £500,000.

Meanwhile Mr Saunders was engaging lawyers and organising a robust defence through the firm of solicitors Cooper Burnett in Tunbridge Wells, who have dealt with the defence of four cases brought so far under the PMR Act (see also *After the Battle* issue 92, page 53 and issue 100, page 58). He realised that he might well have to plead guilty to the technical licence charge, but he was prepared to fight the more serious charges all the way. In the event, after representations from the Crown Prosecution Service, the Magistrates refused jurisdiction so the case was referred for trial by Jury in the Crown Court at Hove.

By the time the day of the trial (July 1, 2002) arrived, the Crown Prosecution Service had already dropped the forgery and deception charges as well as all charges relating to human remains. Much to the annoyance of the Judge at the waste of time, the whole of the first day was spent by the defence and prosecution barristers horse-trading in chambers. The remaining charges were all subsequently dropped, save for the breach of the licence to which Mr Saunders pleaded guilty.

The court convened the following day to hear opening submissions from both sides. It was then revealed in court that Mr Rogers' letter had been sent out of spite because he was aggrieved that Mr Saunders would not change a witness statement in favour of Mr Rogers in an unrelated case of breach of copyright in Tunbridge Wells County Court some months previously in which Mr Rogers was the plaintiff. Mr Rogers subsequently lost that case some weeks prior to the Hove Crown Court hearing.

In passing sentence, His Honour Judge Rennie gave the following statement:

'It is always a very sad day when a court has to deal with a man, such as yourself, who has an impeccable background and no criminal convictions. I recognise that for you, at the age of 47, the acquisition of a criminal record will in itself be a terrible blow; I accept that this fact, on its own, will provide a strong measure of punishment, quite apart from whatever else I do.

'In order for me to try and assess the level of your culpability I have had to compare what you did on this occasion with all that I have learnt about you from your previous work, from Mr Hurst [Defence], and also from the many people who have put their thoughts about you in writing. I have found all of this material extremely helpful.

'The books you have written, as well as the references, testify to the fact that you are an acknowledged expert in the battles that raged in our skies over the south-east of England during the Second World War. Your expertise has extended to tracing the remains of crashed aircraft, often for removal of parts of those planes to museums; as well as the remains of deceased aircrew, often for burial with full military honours. I have read letters from the families, for example, of Pilot Officer Bill Clarke who died in 1940, and Pilot Officer John Ramsay who also died during the Battle of Britain. They express enormous gratitude to you for helping to

Six years later, the Ministry of Defence casualty department at RAF Innsworth, Gloucestershire, received a letter from one of those who had attended the 1995 investigation stating that the remains of the pilot had been found but reburied without being reported. As a result, the Royal Air Force's crash recovery team was sent in to re-dig the site in August 2001 but no substantial human remains were found to confirm the allegation. (*Hastings and St Leonards Observer*)

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ever mindful of the necessity to avoid any distress being caused to next-of-kin, is opposed to the disturbance of any war grave and would not normally support an exhumation for the purpose of establishing identification alone. However, as Flying Officer Kosh's grave *(left)* **was privately owned, the Commission were powerless to stop the opening of the grave. In this case it is understood that the reasons given by the MOD Police to the Home Office for the exhumation licence were in order to secure a conviction. The exhumation** *(right)* **took place before dawn on October 16. In the event, no DNA could be recovered from the remains, thus vindicating the Commission's stance. (*Folkestone Herald*)**

trace the remains of their loved ones, especially when the Ministry of Defence, in one case, had declined to do any further search or recovery work on the basis that your evidence was too flimsy. They were wrong; happily you were right.

'You have also been responsible for aiding in the identification of German pilots who died, so that they could receive proper recognition and burial for the benefit of their families; and are, I am told, currently engaged in trying to trace the remains, for example, of a Polish pilot for the same reason. You were the originator of the concept of a museum at RAF Tangmere which is dedicated to the memory of all airmen from all nations who flew and died over the south-east of England.

'The material which I have read tells me that you are by nature an honest, industrious, compassionate and sensitive man who has spent many years dealing with issues that require all of those virtues because of the feelings of relatives. I have no difficulty in accepting that those descriptions of you are completely accurate and reliable.

'The evidence from a senior policeman, Chief Inspector Dyson, tells me that your conduct in relation to this crash site investigation was, in his assessment, exemplary; and in many ways he is absolutely right. I find that the offence you have committed is technical in its nature and I do not sentence you on the basis that your motivation or your conduct was dishonest: it was not.

'Despite all of this material, I am left with the fact that on this single occasion, and acting totally out of character, you commenced the investigation of a crash site before the Ministry of Defence had granted a licence. You misrepresented to the Ministry of Defence the date upon which the excavation had taken place and gave a partial account of the items recovered. But I accept, as has been urged by Mr Hurst, that those matters are likely to be errors and are not in themselves sinister.

'You removed parts of the plane and two items of the pilot's personal property. I am told that they, shortly afterwards, went on public display. I accept that you treated the unearthed remains of the pilot with proper respect — that was your motivation throughout — and that the remains were appropriately placed back into the ground.

'I believe the clue as to why you behaved in this way comes from two of the references that I have read. Two people who know you well describe you as having this fault: in that you can sometimes allow your enthusiasm far to outstrip your patience, and I am satisfied that this explains how you come to have committed this offence for the first time in your life.

'I need to say a word, before dealing with sentence, about the assertions of Mr Rogers. I am firmly of the view, having considered all matters, that in the grotesque descriptions he has given of the finding of body parts, and your alleged comments and treatment of them, Mr Rogers has lied on the face of the papers and that he appears to have been motivated by a personal grudge arising out of another crash site case in which another judge also found that he had been untruthful. I reject his account completely.

'I believe that the right thing for me to do in this case is to conditionally discharge you for one year, and that is what I do. The conviction itself marks the serious nature of what took place and I am satisfied that these courts are not likely ever to see you again.

'My last words are to the family of Flying Officer George Kosh. He was clearly a very brave young man who died defending this country. He has already been buried with full military honours. I very much hope that with the end of this case the family can dwell only on fond memories of a fine young man and can put this unfortunate distraction behind them.'

Cleared by the judge from any impropriety, Andrew and his wife Zoë are pictured leaving Hove Crown Court on July 2. As well as giving him a conditional discharge, His Honour Judge Rennie also made an order that the majority of Mr Saunders' costs in relation to the Crown Court case should be met out of central funds.

RAF OFFICERS' HOSPITAL, TORQUAY

By F. C. Rexford-Welsh

In 1939, it was decided to set up an RAF Officers' Hospital in a district with both reasonable rail access and good surroundings for convalescence. The Palace Hotel, Torquay, was selected as a suitable building in an extremely favourable location. The town of Torquay was easily accessible by rail with its own station on the Great Western Railway network and the local roads were well metalled and suitable for ambulance traffic in spite of the hilly nature of the surrounding country. The hotel was situated just outside the town at Babbacombe, overlooking the bay, in one of the loveliest parts of Devon. It was also an area well recognised in peacetime as a health resort because of the equable climate which it enjoyed throughout the year. The district was considered to be relatively safe from enemy air attack, an assumption which was, unfortunatley, to prove far from correct.

Every effort was made to get the hospital ready for the reception of patients as soon as possible and in October 1939 a start was made with 48 equipped beds. This number was increased rapidly and the full strenth of 249 beds was achieved by December of that year. The hospital staff in 1939 consisted of 11 RAF officers (including a medical quartermaster and an accountant officer), 22 members of the Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service (including a matron and four senior sisters), 87 airmen and airwomen, including nursing orderlies, and 83 civilian employees, mostly former members of the hotel staff. Although the hotel did not require much structural alteration, it was found necessary to convert four bedrooms on the second floor in order to set up a satisfactory theatre block and it was not possible to complete this work until May 1940. By this time the hospital was running fairly smoothly, the only slight difficulty being that of dealing with patients scattered in what amounted to single rooms. The hospital was then treating more than 100 in-patients of all types and this number increased to 150 by the end of 1940.

Top: **November 1940, The Palace Hotel, Torquay. Probably one of the best known photographs of No. 249 Squadron's Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson (playing the Jew's harp) was taken on the rear terrace of the hotel which had been taken over as an RAF rehabilitation hospital. Nicolson was recovering from wounds received on August 16 in the action for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross (see *The Battle of Britain Then and Now*). (IWM)** *Above:* **Same spot . . . but a different age! (All comparisons by Steve Casely.)**

Nicolson joined the improvised orchestra assembled by the RAF officers in the hospital, both for their own amusement and for the entertainment of their wounded comrades. Although the picture may have been taken in the ballroom on the second floor which doubled up as a concert hall and cinema, this area has since been totally reconstructed.

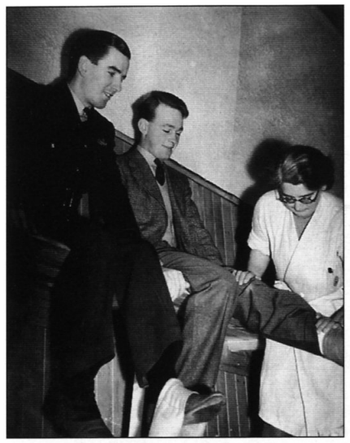
May 30th, 1941 — The War Illustrated — No. 91

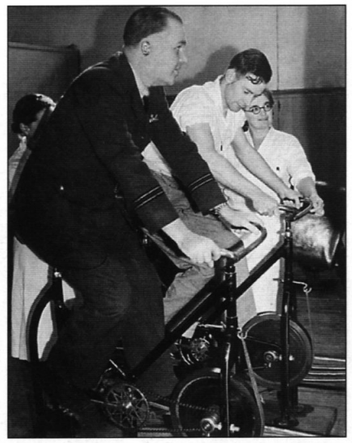
BEAUTY LENDS THE BRAVE A HELPING HAND

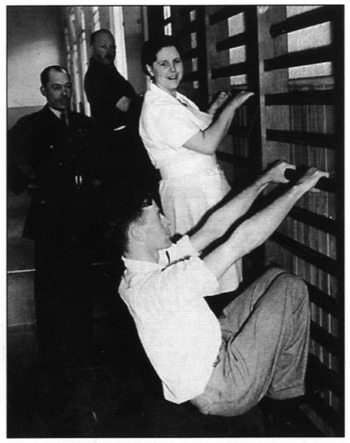
An injured flying-officer finds progress on earth somewhat halting, but with the aid of two sticks and the helping hand of V.A.D. Nurse Sheila Annesley he will surely arrive at his destination without a forced landing! The procedure with a wounded R.A.F. officer is to send him first to hospital, and then, if his case calls for special treatment, he is transferred, when well enough, to a luxury hotel converted into a convalescent home. Here he recuperates under ideal conditions before returning to battle. *Photo, Fox*

The official caption to the Nicolson sequence (which comprises six pictures in all) merely describes the hospital as being 'in the west of England', and other pictures which appeared in the press, like that *(above)*, **were equally non-committal as to the location. With between 150 and 200 patients in the Palace at any one time — all highly trained airmen who were desperately needed for further action — it would be a prime target, albeit that it was marked with a red cross on its roof. Although the concentrated campaign against Britain by the Luftwaffe ceased in May 1941 when its squadrons were transferred east for the attack on the Soviet Union, British south coast towns were still very much at risk from sneak attacks.**

Chris Goss has spent many years researching the so-called 'tip and run' raids and we eagerly await his forthcoming book (*The Luftwaffe Fighter-Bombers: The Tip and Run Campaign over Britain 1942-43*) to be published next year. Chris's knowledge on the subject is second to none and here he describes the events leading up to October 25, 1942. 'Torbay and especially Torquay was always a popular target for the fighter-bombers of 13. Staffel, later 10. Staffel of Jagdgeschwader 2. The first recorded 'tip and run' attack occurred at 1150 hours on March 18, 1942 when two Me 109Fs approached from the north-east, spraying the town with machine-gun fire before dropping two bombs near the pier. Nine days later, four Me 109s, led by the Staffelkapitän, Oberleutnant Frank Liesendahl, attacked both Torquay and Brixham at 1650 hours. The flight that attacked Brixham dropped two bombs in the outer harbour and then machine-gunned an oil depot, the Royal Observer Corps post and the Coastguard station while the aircraft led by Liesendahl sank the *Staghound*. For the next few months, Torquay avoided the Jabos' wrath, the only attack taking place at 1845 hours on June 7 by four Me 109s as Brixham now seemed to be the preferred target. An armed reconnaissance by four Jabos on July 17, developed into an attack on shipping off Brixham and the harbour itself at 1245 hours. Two ships were damaged but the attack cost Frank Liesendahl his life. For his leadership of 10./JG2 and the way he had perfected such 'tip and run' attacks, he had already been awarded the German Cross in Gold and would be post-humously awarded the Knight's Cross. He was replaced by an equally experienced fighter-bomber pilot, Oberleutnant Fritz Schröter. The next attack took place at 1307 hours on August 3, described in one of the participating pilots' logbook as a 'revenge attack'. This was the first time that 10./JG2's Focke-Wulf 190s were seen over Torquay — eight aircraft approached from the south-east, flying at about 20 feet, and bombs were scattered throughout the town. The anti-aircraft gunners claimed to have damaged one but the only casualty was a 190 which crashed on landing back in France. However, the next attack on September 4 did result in one of the attacking force being lost. Led by Leutnant Leopold Wenger, at 1850 hours, four FW 190s dropped bombs both in Torquay and Paignton but as the formation flew between the two towns, light anti-aircraft fire hit the machine flown by Unteroffizier Walter Höfer, and the plane crashed on Tor Abbey Sands, killing the pilot. Torquay does not figure again on 10./JG2's target list until 1108 hours on Sunday, October 25.'



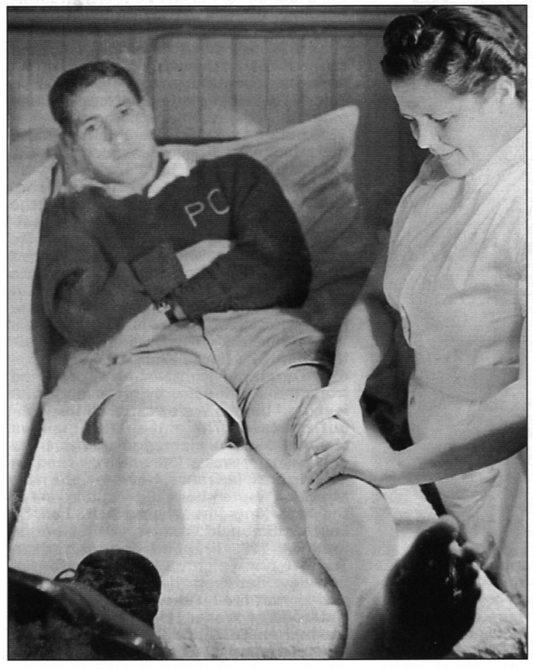




Life at the Palace . . . from the photo album of ACW2 May Booth. *Left:* **Nurse Effie Cooper with Flying Officers Wood and Derbyshire exercising their injured legs with weights.** *Centre:* **Effie supervises the cycling.** *Right:* **On the wall bars.**

'Howard Lester — a casualty from Malta with Sister.'

'George, the Pole, tries out his artificial leg.'



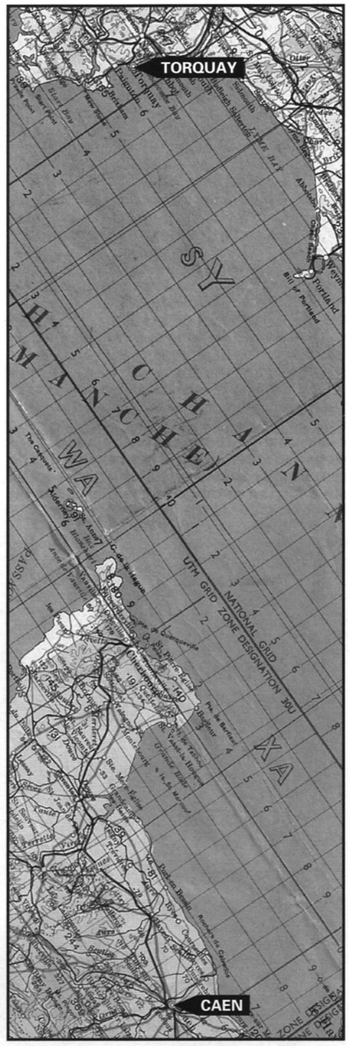
Left: **Dudley Thomas, RNVR, and** *(right)* **Norman Kirkland and Frankie Crawford with their expressions of hope for the future.**

Right: **In June 1941, the hospital had a visit from the Princess Royal who was controller of the Auxiliary Territorial Service. (Princess Mary became the Countess of Harewood when her husband, the popular WWI hero, Viscount 'Lucky' Lascelles, succeeded to the title. King George V conferred the title of Princess Royal upon her in 1932.) She put in countless hours in welfare work for Servicemen and their families and girls of the ATS and the Women's Land Army and her home, Harewood House, became a convalescent home for the wounded where she worked as a nurse. In the picture she is talking to Pilot Officer Atkinson of No. 152 Squadron who had been badly burned around the face and hands when his Spitfire collided with Pilot Officer Inness in cloud on April 20, 1940.** *Below:* **A group of officers pictured on the terrace. Pilot Officer Atkinson has annotated the reverse of the print: 'Palace Hotel, June 1941. Self in deck chair centre of three. Edmunds deck chair left hand [with] head bandage.'** *Below right:* **The terrace looks remarkably the same 60-odd years later, save for the removal of the blast tape on the re-roofed sun lounge.**

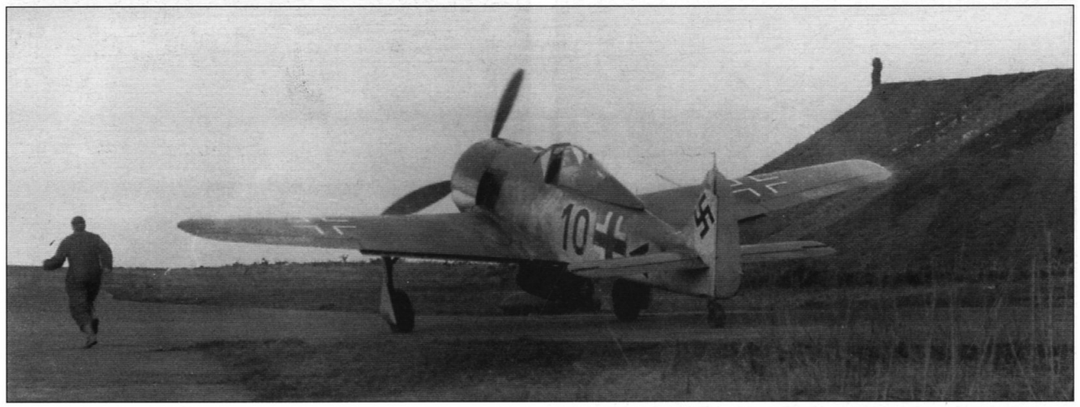
'Relaxing on the terrace after exercises.'

Meanwhile, on a similar terrace in France, another group of young men were also relaxing. The pilots of the 10. Staffel of JG2 are (L-R) Oberleutnant Fritz Schröter, Leutnant Gerhard Limberg, Leutnant Leopold Wenger, unidentified, believed to be Oberstleutnant Karl Hentschel, Oberfeldwebel Werner Magarin, Oberleutnant Frank Liesendahl, Unteroffizier Kurt Pressler and Leutnant Erhard Nippa. (Chris Goss)

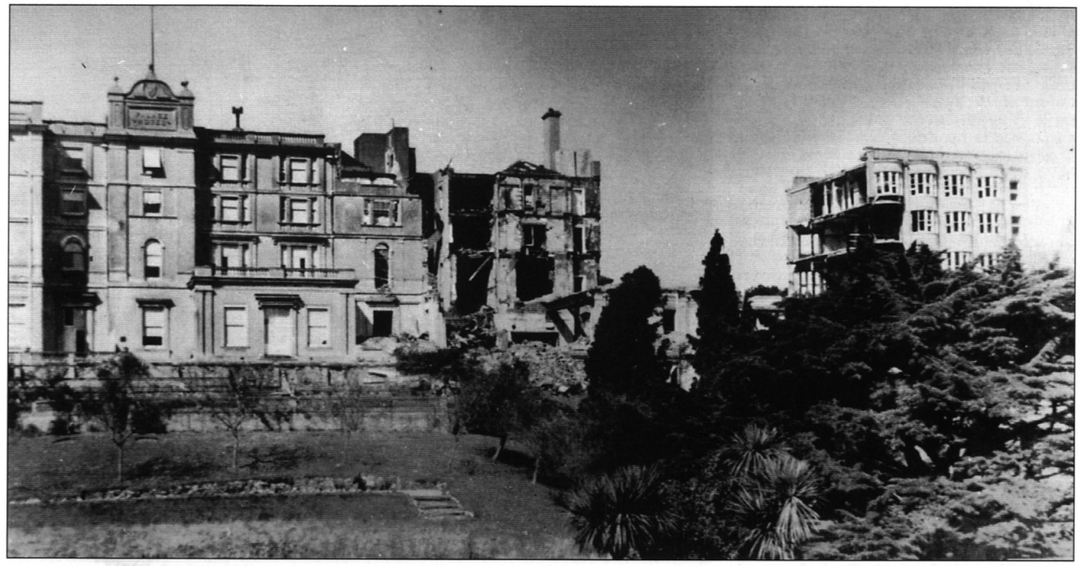
The 10. Staffel were quartered in the Château de Louvigny, which lay just five kilometres from the airfield at Carpiquet, just west of Caen. Bernard Paich matched the shot for us with kind permission of the owner, Pierre de Brye.



From the airfield it was a distance of some 170 miles across the English Channel to Torquay.



Four months prior to the attack, 10./JG2 had been re-equipped with the Focke-Wulf FW 190. (BA)



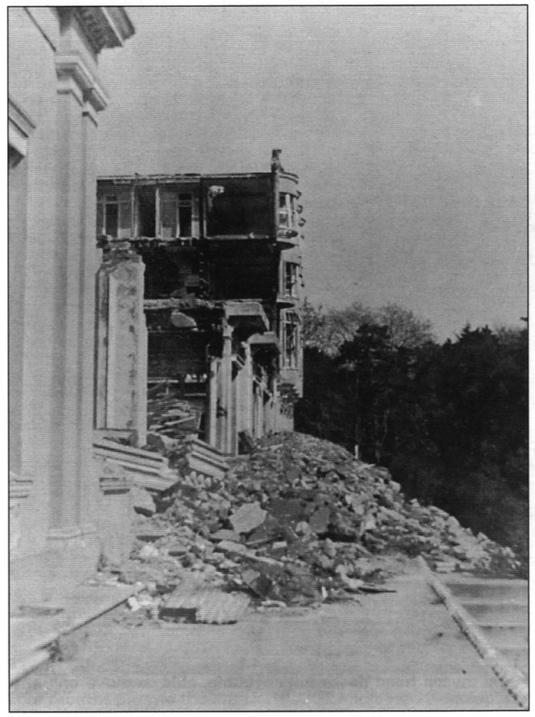
On Sunday, October 25, 1942, at approximately 1100 hours, the hospital area was attacked by enemy aircraft. Following preliminary ground strafing with machine-gun fire, the attack was pressed home with high-explosive bombs of 500 kilos. The first scored a direct hit on the south side of the east wing, the resulting explosion wrecking two sections of the wing from roof to ground level and being responsible for practically all the casualties. The east end of the east wing was virtually cut off from the rest of the hospital buildings and suffered a complete severance of all domestic utilities. The second bomb dropped approximately 50 yards from the north-west corner of the west wing, landing in the main road and exploding on impact. The west wing was extensively damaged by the blast from this bomb. A large number of windows were broken and frames displaced, doors and partitions were wrecked and unfortunately the operating theatre, which was situated in this area, was severely damaged and put out of action. The centre block, which was of older and stronger construction, suffered less and was still serviceable and the kitchen accommodation was undamaged.

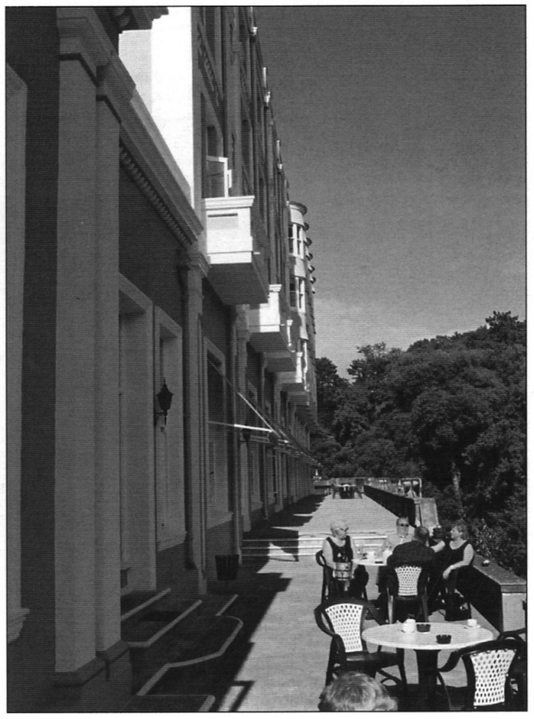
'After church parade on this particular Sunday', noted one of the airmen based in Torquay at No. 1 Initial Training Wing, 'I saw three [sic] single-engined aircraft in close company coming in low over the sea. Reckoning myself to be good at aircraft recce, I quickly identified them as RAF Typhoons. Wrong! In front of our hotel on the cliff-top was a sand-bagged anti-aircraft position consisting of twin-Lewis guns and manned by a sergeant from the Durham Light Infantry. He got it right and began firing at these intruders — the FW 190s!'

Meanwhile, in the Palace Hotel itself, Flying Officer Freddie Sowrey (later to be Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey, KCB, CBE, AFC) was deciding what to do that Sunday. A Mustang pilot with No. 26 Squadron, then based at Gatwick in Sussex, he was recovering from a serious eye infection and was thinking of going into the town for a spot of lunch. 'I was standing by the sash windows looking out to sea over the lawns and woodland in front of the hotel. Two aircraft appeared head on, low, and I thought they were Me 109s. When gun flashes appeared on the leading edges of the wings and strikes could be heard on the upper storeys, I decided that it would be safer to lie down under the window. There was a gigantic flash and I found myself head down under rubble, able to move only my left foot.'

At the very moment that the attack took place, men of the 10th Devon (Torbay) Battalion Home Guard were carrying out a tactical exercise in the vicinity. Under their second-in-command, Second Lieutenant H. W. Adams, the troops lost no time in commencing rescue operations and there is no doubt that but for their prompt action many more lives would have been lost in the wreckage on that fateful morning. 'Two squads had been detailed', Lieutenant Adams wrote in the unit history, 'No. 1 under Sergeant Curtis to recconnoitre Babbacombe Road to the entrance of the hotel, and No. 2 under my command to reconnoitre the hotel grounds. At about 1130 hours No. 2 patrol had reached a point midway on the south side of the tennis courts. Suddenly I heard the roar of planes overhead. On looking up I saw two German planes flying side by side at tree-top height making a direct dive at the hotel. I then saw the plane on the left (now slightly in advance of the other) send the bomb direct for the building. It appeared to be coming down on us. I shouted to the patrol to take cover, which they did. Some went to ground, others took shelter in the gymnasium. Corporal Duncan and I went down where we were standing. The bomb landed direct on the hotel about 25 yards from us. Both Corporal Duncan and I were lifted by blast and carried about 20 yards, Corporal Duncan landing in the hedge. Fortunately we escaped injuries but received a bad shock. My trip through the air was brought to an end by the gymnasium wall, receiving nothing more than a cut above the eye and a badly bruised shoulder and ribs. I immediately took the responsibility to cancel operation exercise, and gathered the patrol together. I then formed rescue squads, leading No. 1 Squad to the top storey of the building, No. 2 Squad under Corporal Jowett taking the second storey from the top. On

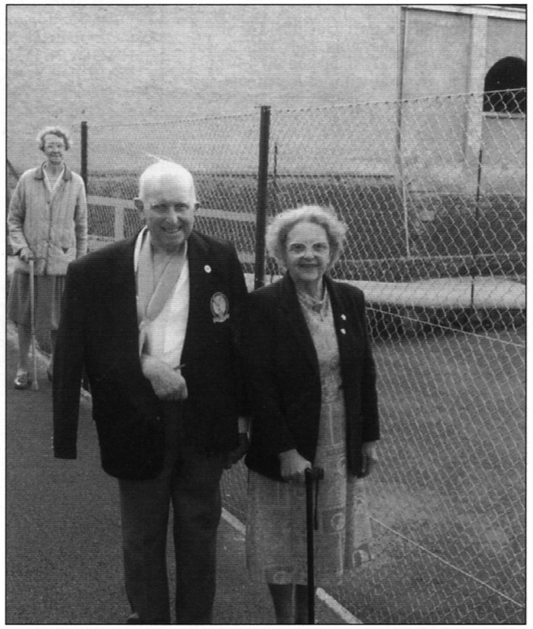
arrriving at the top of the building by way of the fire escape, further progress was stopped by debris. In a few moments we had dumped it overboard and gained entrance. The first four we rescued were girls, all of whom were seriously injured, having been completely buried by the debris. We brought them down the escape in blankets as we could not use stretchers. In five hours we had uncovered and brought out 15 persons, six girls all alive, nine men, two dead. We put the four worst cases in bed and made them warm and comfortable. One of these had a broken back. I gave orders that they must not be removed until the doctor had seen them. The doctor and matron arrived and I handed them over to their care and placed myself and men under their orders. I remained until the sling arrived and removed the bad cases under the doctor's supervision. In the meantime I received information that two men of No. 1 Section, Privates Weekes and Roe, had been killed. I went to the scene of disaster and found them to be beyond human aid. I identified them and covered the bodies, then reported to Incident Officer and waited until the ambulance arrived to remove them.'





In September 2000, Steve Casely, our West Country photographer, took three survivors of the bombing back to the Palace. *Left:* ACW1 Audrey Millward was a care assistant at the hospital and was in the room she is pointing to when the bomb hit. The blast blew in the door knocking her down and covering her. The door did however protect her to a certain extent from the masonry, which rained down. She lay there trapped for eight hours. At about 7 p.m., when it was thought no one else alive or dead was left in the wreckage, LAC Leslie Martin heard faint cries from above. He climbed the outside fire escape and went into the wrecked floor; he found Audrey and rescued her from underneath the door. Leslie carried her out and down the fire escape *(right)* to safety. Minutes before the blast she had been in the centre section of the Palace where the majority of the damage had been done. Both her ear drums were burst by the pressure wave and she has worn hearing aids ever since. (Audrey was not a well woman when Steve interviewed her, and she has since died.)

Rescue work was begun immediately by the staff assisted by all the convalescent patients. Reinforcements arrived quickly in the shape of the local Air Raid Precautions squad and the Home Guard, and the work of rescue and resuscitation was rapidly organised. Operations were based on a scheme prepared for such an emergency by the Officer Commanding, who had planned to use the main ballroom as a casualty clearing centre. In view of the extensive damage to this area it was decided to use the sisters' mess for this purpose and, as most of the reserve medical stores were kept nearby and were therefore readily to hand, this proved to be a wise choice. Only first-aid treatment and resuscitation were attempted by the staff because the majority of the hospital buildings had been damaged and there was no suitable surgical accommodation for major procedures. Patients were brought by stretcher to the casualty centre for rapid diagnosis after which any necessary dressings and splints were applied and drugs adminis-



A beautiful then and now comparison in the grounds. *Left:* Leslie Martin has his arm round his girl friend ACW2 May Booth on their way to the cookhouse. Audrey was following but stopped when she saw that the couple were being photographed but was just caught on the extreme left of the frame. *Right:* Steve is a fanatic for detail so he set up the shot on exactly the same spot 58 years later . . . only now Les and May have been husband and wife since 1942!

Audrey escaped but her friend Muriel Dyson died.

tered. Plenty of blankets and hot-water bottles were available for the treatment of shock, but unfortunately no electric cradles or blankets were available, having been either destroyed or buried in the debris. The kitchens were still functioning and able to produce continuous supplies of hot drinks, a matter of particular importance, as it was a bitterly cold, rainy day and the entire building was draughty as a result of the almost complete destruction of the windows.

At the time of the raid the hospital was full, with a total of 203 patients. The casualties are listed in the panel on this page. Among the injuries were five fractures, two of them serious, and 17 lacerations, with two serious cases. Considering the number of patients present these figures were considered low because if the incident had occurred on a weekday, the milk bar, which was located in a severely damaged area, would have been crowded with both patients and staff at the eleven o'clock break. Fortunately, however, the incident occurred on a Sunday, when no organised programme was followed.

The picture was taken here on the seafront at Torquay.

ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' HOSPITAL TORQUAY

Casualties in air raid on Sunday, October 25, 1942

KILLED

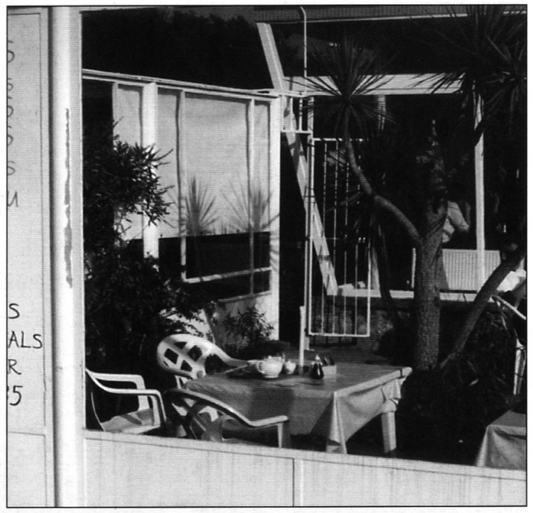
Name	*Unit*
BURKE, Harry, W/Cdr	No. 1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge
CHAPMAN, Robert, P/O	No. 460 Squadron, Breighton
CORDELL-BELL, Helen, VAD	Nurse, British Red Cross
CZAJKOWSKI, Franciszek, F/O	No. 151 Squadron (Polish Air Force)
DYSON, Muriel, ACW1	Batwoman, injured, died Torbay Hospital 28th
HAWKES, George, F/O	No. 1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge
HUGHES, Margaret, ACW1	Batwoman, injured, died Torbay Hospital 27th
JANDER, Witold, F/O	No. 1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge (Polish Air Force)
LITTLEWOOD, Wallis, W/Cdr	No. 1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge
LUDDINGTON, Richard, F/O	RAF Station, Bircham Newton
PEDERSON, Oscar, P/O	No. 3 Squadron, No. 13 Training Wing
PICKERING, Clifford, Sgt	PT Instructor, RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
READ, Kathleen	Nurse, British Red Cross
ROE, Alfred, Private	10th Devon (Torbay) Bn, Home Guard
STRASBURGER, Andrzej, F/O	RAF Station, Ford (Polish Air Force)
WARNER, Stanley, P/O	No. 1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge
WEEKES, Maurice, Private	10th Devon (Torbay) Bn, Home Guard
WHITTLE, Humphrey, Gp/Cptn	No. 1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge
WINFIELD, John, S/Ldr	No. 1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge
WOJCICKI, Kazimierz, P/O	RAF Station, Hemswell (Polish Air Force)
WOOD, Allan, F/O	No. 120 Squadron, Ballykelly

INJURED

BARRETT, John, F/Lt	No. 13 Squadron
BERRIDGE, Rosamund, VAD	RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
BRAITHWAITE,Sidney P/O	RAF Station, Lichfield
CAILLEUX, Robert, S/Lt	RAF Station, Aldergrove (Free French)
DEL PINA COLLING, Margaret S/O	No. 27 Group, Technical Training
COMPTON, Violet, ACW	RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
CONEY, Phillip, F/Lt	Central Flying School (RNZAF)
CURRY, Ronald, F/Lt	No. 3 Squadron, AFU
FLETCHER, Rex, F/O	RAF Station, Drem
FORTESCUE, Rosemary, VAD	RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
GAWRON, John, F/Lt	RAF Station, Bramcote (Polish Air Force)
GIBSON, John, F/Lt	RAF Station, Exeter
GOLDBERG, Morris, F/O	RAF Station, Uxbridge (RCAF)
HADDON, Frank, P/O	RAF Station, Lyneham
HALLIDAY, Richard, F/O	No. 1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge
HARVIE, James, P/O	No. 29 OTU (RCAF)
HEANLY, Raymond, P/O	RAF Police
HRABKIEWICZ, Leopold, F/Lt	Polish Inspector-Generals Department
KEENE, Mr	Civilian, RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
LAZAROWICZ, Jerzy, F/O	RAF Station, Exeter (Polish Air Force)
LITTLEFAIR, John, P/O	No. 3 Glider Training School
McCLENNAN, Norman, P/O	RAF Station, Little Rissington
MADDEN, Brian, P/O	RAF Station, Duxford
MIKOLAJEWSKI, Edward, F/Lt	RAF Station, Farnborough (Polish Air Force)
MILWARD, (No full name) ACW1	RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
MILNE, Harry, F/O	No. 1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge (RCAF)
PAUL, Johea, ACW1	RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
SMYTH-PIGGOTT, Joseph, Gp/Cptn	No. 23 OTU
SOWREY, Frederick, F/O	RAF Station, Gatwick
STREET, Vera, ACW1	RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
SUMMERSON, Margery, ACW1	Batwoman, RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
SWAN, Peter, P/O	RAF Station, Horsham St Faith (RAAF)
THOMAS, Dudley, Sub/Lt	Admiralty
WATKINS, Henry, F/Lt	RAF Station, Lindholme
WEETCH, Walter, F/Lt	No. 51 Group, Wolverhampton
WILLIAMS, Evelyn, ACW	RAF Officers' Hospital, Torquay
WILLIAMS, James, S/Ldr	HQ Fighter Command
WRIGHT, Frank, Gp/Cptn	Flying Training Command
WRIGHT, William, P/O	RAF Station, Redhill (RAAF)
ZINOVIEFF, Andrew, F/Lt	No. 2 ACD (Russian)

KILLED ELSEWHERE IN TORQUAY

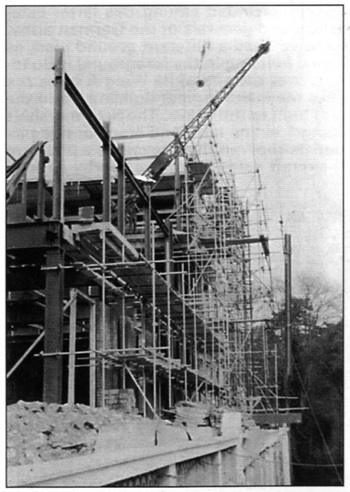
CANN, Ethel	Injured at No. 2 Lindridge Road, died Torbay Hospital 26th
HARTLAND, Gladys	Injured St Paul's Church, died November 3
THOMAS, Margaret	Injured at 11 Babbacombe Road, died Torbay Hospital



Left: **A photographer's kiosk stood nearby and many of the girls had their picture taken there. Here in happier times May Booth on the right is pictured with Margaret Hughes, her best friend. Les said that after the bombs fell many of the beds remained hanging from the various levels with bedding and pillow down floating back to earth. He had already rescued Margaret who was gravely injured but she died the following Tuesday.** *Above:* **A sad duty for Steve, matching the photo of two beautiful young WAAFs. Margaret is now buried in Lampeter Independent Chapelyard in Cardiganshire.**

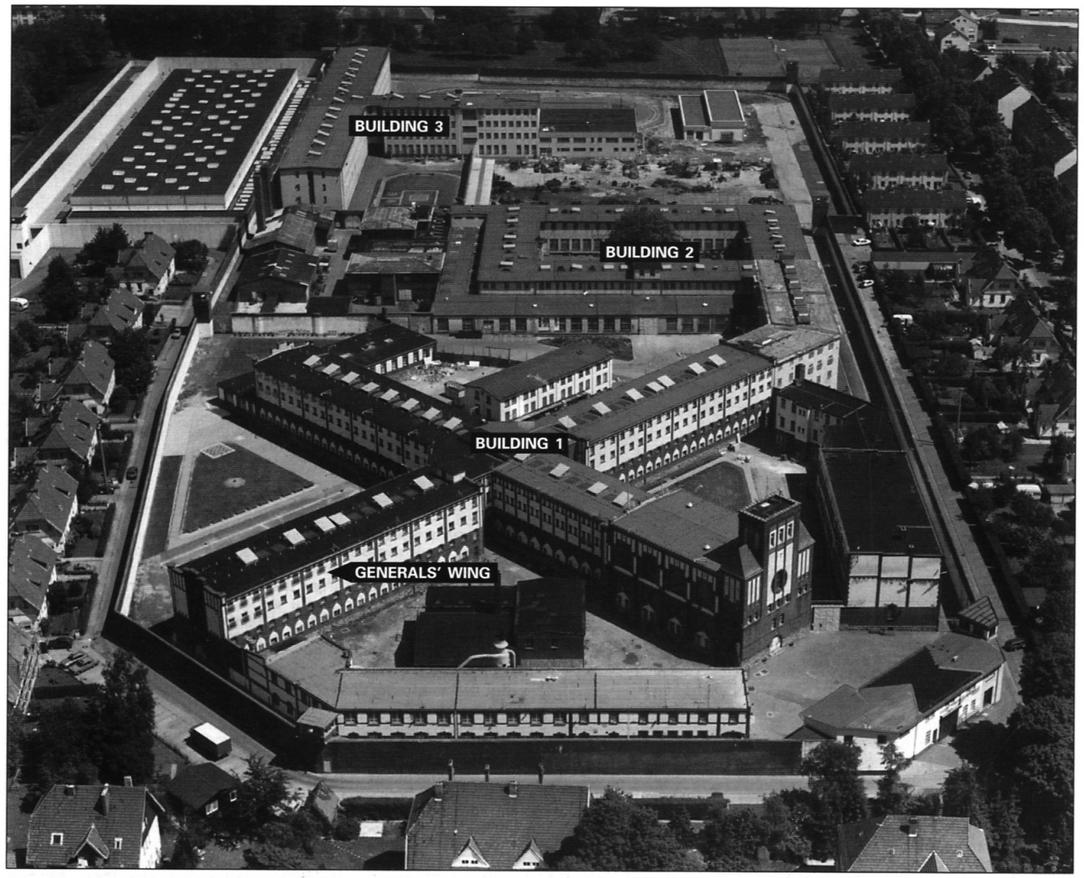
As it was obvious that the hotel would be untenable for some time the problem was twofold: the disposal of casualties according to the gravity of their condition and the transfer of the remaining patients to other hospitals. As soon as the condition of the injured permitted they were removed by ambulance, the more serious cases to Torbay Emergency Medical Service Hospital and the remainder to the Torquay station sick quarters. It was found necessary to give plasma transfusions to two of the seriously injured before it was considered safe to transfer them but in the majority of cases there was no delay and the last casualty was evacuated from the hospital at approximtely 1545 hours on the same day, some 4½ hours after the incident. Uninjured patients were sent home wherever possible and those whose condition required continued hospital attention were transferred to the RAF hospitals at Wroughton and Melksham.

After the evacuation, the hospital was left in the hands of a care and maintenance party pending a decision as to the fate of the building. On January 8, 1943, another enemy attack resulted in considerable damage to the central block, although fortunately no further casualties were sustained. The building was then considered useless and the hospital closed down, further accommodation for officers being found in May 1943 at Cleveleys Hydro near Blackpool.



THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED BY
THE LOCAL BRANCH OF
THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION
TO COMMEMORATE
THE USE OF THIS BUILDING
AS AN R.A.F. OFFICERS HOSPITAL
UNTIL BOMBED ON THE 25TH OCTOBER
1942

Left: **The Palace was not repaired until the war was over and it reopened in March 1948.** *Right:* **Dan Maskell, who made his mark after the war as a tennis commentator, unveils a memorial plaque at the hotel in December 1975. Then a Flight Lieutenant and the hospital's rehabilitation officer, Dan said that the blast went right through the building and hit the gymnasium where some 120-150 patients would have been exercising on a weekday. In spite of detailed research, Chris Goss says that it is not known which pilots from 10./JG2 were responsible for the attack but of the two bombs dropped on the hospital (which Peter Wooding says was clearly marked with a large red cross), it was the first that caused the most damage and all the casualties. Tip and run raids on the South-West continued, Torquay being attacked twice more on January 8 and May 30, 1943 until the JG2 Jabos were transferred to Sicily the following month.**



From 1945 to 1957, the prison at the small Westphalian town of Werl served as Allied Prison in the British Zone of Occupation, housing — among other prisoners — the war criminals convicted by British military courts. Included among this latter category were some of the best-known field-marshals and generals of the German army. Each of the three main blocks composing the prison had a different ground plan, as illustrated in this modern aerial. The cross-shaped building in the foreground is Building 1, the original prison of 1908. The clock tower at the end of its Wing A faces the main gate (at lower right). Behind Building 1 lies the quadrangular Building 2 and the T-shaped block at the far end is Building 3, both built in the 1930s. The field-marshals and generals were all kept in Wing B of Building 1 — the left-hand block in this picture. During the war the tower of Building 1 had its roof removed to create a platform for a 2cm Flak gun, set up as part of the anti-aircraft defences of the nearby airfield. The pointed roof was never rebuilt.

WERL ALLIED PRISON

By Helmuth Euler

From 1945 to 1957 the prison at Werl, a small provincial town 20 miles east of Dortmund in Nordrhein-Westfalen, served as one of the central Allied Prisons in Germany. There were other Allied jails in post-war Germany — notably at Wittlich in the French Zone of Occupation, Landsberg near Munich in the American Zone, and Spandau in Berlin — but Werl, in the British Zone, gained special fame because this was the prison where some of the most-famous field-marshals and generals of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS who had been convicted for war crimes served their sentence.

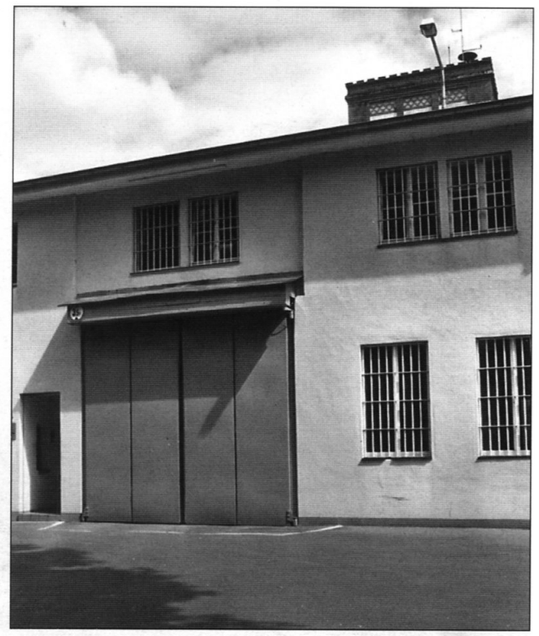
At the time, Werl prison was one of the largest jails in the country, providing cells for some 1,600 prisoners. When originally built in 1905-08, the prison had consisted of just one main building of four wings, built in the form of a cross, with cells for 615 prisoners, the whole being enclosed by a five-metre-high brick wall with guard towers at each corner.

During the Nazi era, the jail was expanded twice. In 1933, construction was begun on a second prison block, immediately to the east and adjacent to the old block. Known as Building 2, it also had four wings but was quadrangular with an inner courtyard, adding cells for another 180 prisoners. Building 3, started in 1938 next to Building 2, was in the form of a 'T' and increased facilities to accomodate another 800 inmates. By then the wall encircling the whole complex had been raised by an extra 90cm, and the number of guard towers risen to seven.

Like with all prisons in Germany, the regime at Werl until 1945 reflected the historical stages of the country's politics and society. For the first ten years of its existence, until the dissolution of the German Empire in 1918, the prison applied the penal system of the Kaiserzeit based on the ideology of strict isolation of prisoners from one another. Inmates were locked up one man to a cell, kept apart during work, and were not allowed to talk to one another. Re-education of prisoners was strongly anchored on, and limited itself to, religious activities. (Building 1 included a church hall with 350 seats.)

During the Weimar Republic from 1919 to 1933 many prison reforms took place, leading to a more humane treatment of inmates and a prison regime aimed at re-socialising the prisoners.

With the advent of the Third Reich in 1933 this more liberal policy was radically reversed. Prisoners were now subjected to a dictatorial rule enforcing harsh discipline with draconic penalties for even minor offenses. Prisoners were no longer seen as human beings but as 'units of labour' to be exploited, first under the 'Four Years' Plans' and later under the German war economy. From 1933 onwards, the number of political prisoners — communists, socialists and other opponents of the Nazi regime — rose rapidly. From 1939, as Hitler's Germany overran one European country after another, the number of prisoners — criminal, political and some from foreign countries — increased markedly and by 1944 some 2,000 people were incarcerated at Werl, making it the largest jail in the Reich.



Left: **The prison's main gate. Visitors had to ring at this door, but later a separate entry for those visiting the VIP inmates was built in the prison wall at another spot.** *Right*: **The old gatehouse was replaced in the mid-1950s with this modern structure.**

By early April 1945, armoured spearheads of the US Ninth Army, pushing south-east across the autobahn from the direction of Hamm, were approaching Werl. On April 7, the 379th Infantry Regiment of the US 95th Infantry Division with armoured support attacked the town, aiming for the local aerodrome and the adjacent prison. At 1600 hours, two Sherman tanks drove up to the prison, halted in front of the main gate and menacingly aimed their guns at the big steel doors. The gate did not open immediately but, a few minutes later, an announcement could be heard over the prison loudspeaker system ordering all personnel to form up in the forecourt. Wachtmeister Franz-Josef Struwe, the gatekeeper at that time, recalls: 'As the 120 or so prison functionaries stood lined up in rows of three, the prison director, Dr August Faber, entered the courtyard giving the 'Heil Hitler' salute — whereupon a soldier standing nearby slapped him in the face.' Thus the prison surrendered to the Americans. Shortly after, a great howling of joy engulfed the whole facility as hundreds of ecstatic inmates came streaming out of their cells to welcome their liberators.

Immediately after the jail's capitulation, the Americans arranged an impromptu surrender ceremony whereby every prison warder was required to throw his bunch of cell keys on a big heap and surrender any side arms. This done, and with the southern half of Werl still in German hands, the entire prison personnel was marched away in a long column to the village of Scheidingen, four miles to the north.

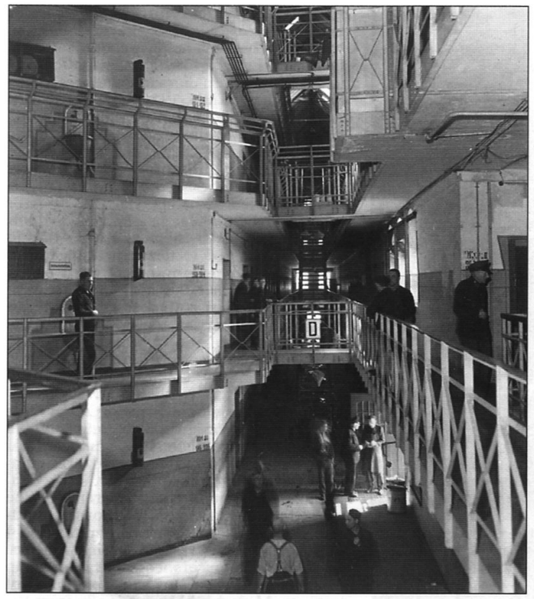
The Americans had advanced on Werl prison suspecting that the huge walled complex was a concentration camp and had mistaken the black coats of the prison personnel for SS uniforms. It took considerable time to convince them that Werl was really a 'normal' correctional facility. For the duration of their investigation, all German personnel was detained, the Americans relying on the former inmates to determine who could remain in service.

On April 11, a Ninth Army military government detachment set up a military court which registered all prisoners and began procedures to sort out political prisoners from common criminals. Not surprisingly, nearly all of the inmates of the latter category took this chance to claim that they had been detained for political reasons. The Americans had already prepared a list of 150 names of people whom they knew had been jailed between 1933 and 1945 on political grounds and these persons were released forthwith. By then, some of the more impatient inmates had enlarged the holes in the prison wall created by Allied bombs and shells, allowing anyone to leave or enter the prison at will. Many had soon found civilian clothes to replace their prison garments.

Left: **Units of the US Ninth Army captured Werl prison on April 7, 1945. As a formal surrender ceremony, the Americans required all of the prison officials and warders to hand in their master keys. Throwing his bunch onto the heap in this picture is Julius Bolschewski. (USNA)** *Right*: **Comparison taken by our author, Helmuth Euler, in August 2002.**

At the time of its capture, the prison contained some 2,000 inmates, both political prisoners of the Nazi regime and common criminals. On April 11, the Americans assembled the inmates for registration and questioning by one of Ninth Army's Military Government detachments. This picture, taken from an upper window of Building 2, shows them waiting in the yard between Building 1 and 2 (compare with the aerial on page 44). The cell block in the left background is Wing C of Building 1, the lower building on the right is the prison hospital, and the building in the centre one of the prison workshops. (USNA)

A sports field and new fences have been added but the prison buildings remain much as they were.



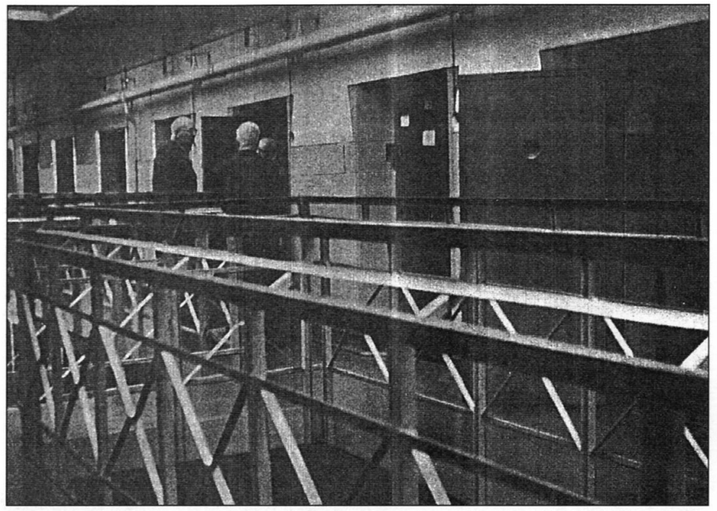
Looking down Wing D of Building 1. Picture taken by the Americans on April 11, when the liberated prisoners were still free to leave their cells at will. (USNA)

Helmuth Euler secured special permission to photograph inside the jail. Alterations have made an exact comparison difficult but the same 'D' sign stills hangs on the first-floor railing.

Werl lay within the British Zone of Occupation and in June 1945 the prison was handed over to the British. The British authorities appointed a Canadian officer, Major I. A. Poirier, as prison governor. He quickly restored order and discipline. On arrival, he pointed his cane at the open gate and instructed gatekeeper Struwe: 'Close the door. The coming and going of prisoners is to stop immediately.' He directed the gaps in the walls to be closed, deposed the prison police which the inmates had appointed from among themselves and, after interrogation and study of personnel files, reinstated most of the original staff. Under Poirier the prison slowly returned to normality.

Soon, Werl began to be used as the central prison to house war criminals sentenced by British (and Canadian) military courts. Trials by British military tribunals took place in many places, inside and outside Germany, but from 1948 onwards most of these were held at the Curio-Haus in Hamburg (like for example the trial of SS-Obersturmbannführer Fritz Knöchlein indicted for the Le Paradis massacre of May 1940, see *After the Battle* No. 15).

Left: **A sentry guarding outside Building 3. This was where the lower-rank war criminals had their cells until 1950. In that year all prisoners convicted by British tribunals were concentrated in Building 1, with the war criminals being put with the generals in Wing B. (USNA)** *Right*: **Benches and shrubs now liven up the yard outside, but Building 3 remains as it was.**



Three of the former generals conversing in the corridor outside their cells. L-R: Max Simon, former commander of the 16. SS-Panzergrenadier-Division; Eberhard von Mackensen, former commander of the 14. Armee; and Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, former Wehrmacht commander in Norway. All three had originally been sentenced to death, which was later changed to life imprisonment, and then further reduced to 21 years for Simon and von Mackensen and ten years for von Falkenhorst. This picture appeared in *Stern* magazine of September 28, 1952.

In all, 226 convicted German war criminals were detained a Werl — 209 men and 17 women. Their sentences ranged from five years to the death penalty. The 226 encompassed a motley variety of people from many different organisations of the Third Reich: Nazi party officials, members of the Gestapo, of the Sicherheitsdienst, concentration camp guards (most of the female prisoners were former SS-Aufseherinnen, camp wardresses), policemen, soldiers of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS, civilians, etc.

The soldiers locked up at Werl ranked from field-marshals and generals to lowly corporals and privates. The officers of general rank included some of the most-famous personalities of the war. In all there were ten:

Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, former commander-in-chief in Italy, tried at Venice in 1947 for atrocities committed under his command in Italy (notably the notorious massacre of 335 Italian hostages in the Ardeatine caves outside Rome in March 1944 — see *After the Battle* No. 52), condemned to death, sentence later commuted to life imprisonment.

Generalfeldmarschall Erich von Manstein, former commander of Heeresgruppe Süd on the Eastern Front, tried at Hamburg in 1949 for war crimes committed on the Eastern Front in areas under his command, sentenced to 18 years imprisonment.

Generaloberst Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, former Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber in Norway, tried by a mixed British-Norwegian court at Braunschweig in 1946 for handing over captured British commandos (gliderborne sappers captured in Operation 'Freshman' in November 1942 — see *After the Battle* No. 45) to the SS for shooting, condemned to death, sentence later commuted to 20 years imprisonment.

Generaloberst Eberhard von Mackensen, former commander of the 14. Armee in Italy, tried at Rome in 1946 for the massacre in the Ardeatine caves, condemned to death, sentence later commuted to life imprisonment.

General der Flak August Schmidt, former commander of Luftgau VI (Münster), tried in 1947 for transmitting orders for the killing of captured Allied airmen, sentenced to life imprisonment, later commuted to ten years.

General der Artillerie Curt Gallenkamp, former commander of the LXXX. Armeekorps in France, tried at Wuppertal in March 1947 for the murder of captured British SAS and Jedburgh parachutists near Poitiers in July 1944, who had been dropped in June in Operation 'Bulbasket', condemned to death but later commuted to life imprisonment.

Generalleutnant Kurt Wolff, former Kommandeur Kriegsgefangenenwesen (commander of POW department) in Wehrkreis VIII (Breslau), tried at Braunschweig in 1947 for exposing British prisoners of war to air raids at the synthetic petrol plant complex at Blechhammer in Upper Silesia in 1944, sentenced to seven years imprisonment.

Generalleutnant Kurt Mälzer, former Ortskommandant of Rome, tried together with von Mackensen at Rome in 1946 for the massacre in the Ardeatine caves, condemned to death, sentence later commuted to life imprisonment.

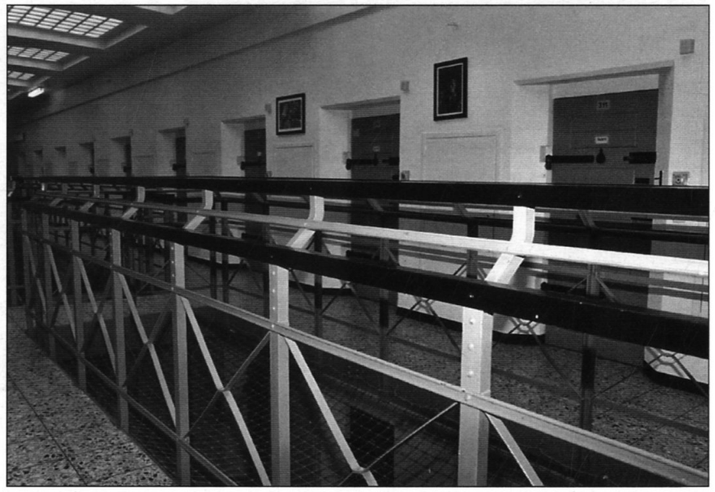
SS-Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer, former commander of the 12. SS-Panzer-Division, tried by a Canadian military court at Aurich, Germany, in 1945 for the massacre of captured Canadian soldiers at Ardenne Abbey in Normandy in June 1944 (see *D-Day Then and Now*, pages 500-501), condemned to death, sentence later commuted to life imprisonment.

SS-Gruppenführer Max Simon, former commander of the 16. SS-Panzergrenadier-Division, tried at Padua, Italy, in 1947 for several atrocities against Italian civilians committed by his division in northern Italy in 1944, condemned to death, sentence later commuted to life imprisonment.

The first of the generals did not arrive at Werl until 1947, von Mackensen and Mälzer arriving in January, Kesselring in February and Gallenkamp in April. Simon arrived in April 1948, von Manstein in December 1949, von Falkenhorst and Wolff in January 1950, and Meyer only in October 1951.

At the same time as it held the German war criminals, Werl prison continued to hold 'normal' prisoners, persons convicted for offenses other than war crimes. A large number of these, in fact the majority, were non-Germans. By its own doings, Germany in the immediate post-war period housed thousands of 'displaced persons' from many different nations — released foreign workers, freed slave labourers, concentration camp inmates, holocaust survivors, prisoners of war, etc. Many of them, especially from the Eastern European countries now under Soviet rule, had no means or wish to return to their native country and found themselves stranded in Germany. The crime rate among them was high. Persons found offending against Allied Military Government decrees were tried before military courts — these accounted for 90 per cent of the cases imprisoned at Werl. The remaining ten per cent had been tried by regular German courts.

In all, between 1945 and 1950, some 6,500 prisoners (635 of them female) from 36 different nations were incarcerated at Werl. About half of these were German, but some 3,220 came from other countries. By far the largest majority of them were Poles (2,176), with Dutch nationals (296), Yugoslavs (158), Italians (92), Russians (71), Belgians (61), Czechs (60) and French nationals (48) being the next-largest contingents. Crimes committed included murder, robbery, illegal possession of arms, looting, illegal border-crossing (many of the Dutch at Werl were guilty of this offence), receiving stolen goods, etc.



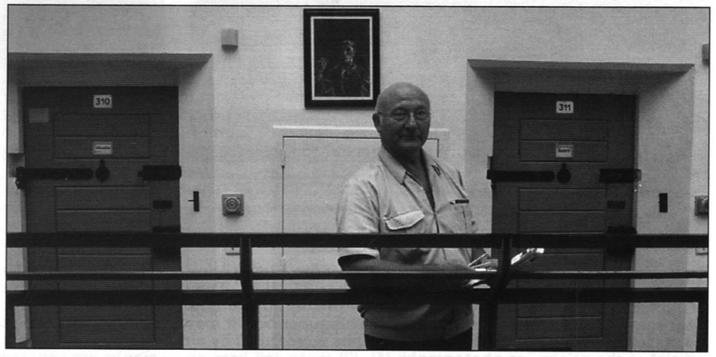
The same row of cells on the upper floor of Wing B as it looks today.

As an example, on January 12, 1948 Werl housed a total of 1,733 inmates, 1,600 men and 133 women. Before 1945, Werl had never housed female prisoners but this changed when it became an Allied prison. In due course a special women's section was set up in Building 2 to which all female inmates were transferred. Guarding the men's wings were 247 warders while 20 wardresses were being employed in the women's section. Supervising the German personnel was the British governor and his staff of 12 Civil Court Government (CCG) officials.

The ten VIP prisoners at Werl — the field-marshals and generals — were initially segregated from the other war criminals. They were all kept in Wing B of Building 1 (where they occupied the cell row on the top floor) while the lower-rank war convicts were initially concentrated in Building 3. This changed in 1950 when, for administrative efficiency, all prisoners convicted by British tribunals were concentrated in Building 1, with the war criminals (including the VIPs) in Wing B, and the prisoners convicted by Allied tribunals for common crimes in Wings C and D.

Daily life at the prison was governed by the regulations issued by Governor Poirier in June 1945. Reveille was at 0530 and lights out in the cells at 2000 hours. If a prisoner behaved well, he or she could get books from the prison library, apply for a prison job, or request to see the prison commander. Non-German inmates could apply for extradition to their native country, but only if he or she showed exemplary conduct. Prisoners were allowed to look out of their cell windows, but forbidden to talk to others through them. Every prisoner was allowed to send and receive one letter per month (with those from Allied nations being allowed to send and receive two) and receive one parcel at Christmas. Each prisoner was entitled to receive one visitor every six weeks, but visitors were only allowed entry if they had a special permit secured beforehand from the British authorities. Visits were kept quite

Above: **The last ex-General to arrive at Werl was Kurt Meyer, the former commander of the 12. SS-Panzer-Division. 'Panzermeyer', as he was generally known, had been captured by the Americans on September 6, 1944, in Belgium (see *After the Battle* No. 98) and been tried and condemned to death by a Canadian court in December 1945. After his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, he had already spent five years in a prison in Canada before he was transferred to Werl in October 1951. This picture, taken illegally like the one opposite, shows Meyer in the gangway outside his cell.** *Below*: **One of the present-day warders stands in for Panzermeyer.**



Allied National Prison Werl
Private Road Prison Approach only
By Order of Prison Governor
Alliiertes Gefängnis Werl
Privatweg nur für Gefängnisverkehr
im Auftrage des Gouverneurs der Anstalt
Prison pour Alliées Werl
Route privée conduisant à
la Prison uniquement
Par Ordre du Gouverneur

Left: **Photography at or near the prison was always strictly forbidden. Helmuth Euler (also our author of *The Dams Raid Through the Lens)*, who has lived in Werl all his life, managed to take this shot in 1954 when his uncle Hugo Lohmann (left) and Cletus Tönnies (right), a relative serving in the US Army, viewed the prison from the outside.** *Right*: **Helmuth in 1999 at the same spot on the corner of Langenwiedenweg and Plaschkestrasse, at the beginning of the short approach road to the prison.**

Unser Titelbild:

Ursula hat es geschafft!

Noch vor einem Jahr verwaltete die Hamburgerin Ursula Trautwein in München eine Filiale einer bekannten Kette von Filmtheatern, auf einen Mitarbeiter, der ihr ständig erniedrigte, einen Modeschmuckhändler, der junge Frau und bot ihr eine Beschäftigung als Fotomodell an. Ursula ging darauf ein, verschwand als Assistentin für verschiedene Gemälde in einer deutschen Zeitschrift, LIFE, das große amerikanische Magazin, brachte sie in ein, nicht ganz typisch für sie. Ursula ist heute 27 Jahre alt, Ursula ist Protestantin, hat 1951 einen Scheidungsvertrag hinter sich, und jetzt ist sie auf dem Weg nach Hollywood, nach Indien, um dort ihren ersten Film als neuen Filmstar zu drehen.

Aufnahme: Interwood A. G. O.

PRISMA UNSERER TAGE

Tausendundeine Nacht Bei dem Besuch der Prinzessin Elisabeth und des Herzogs von Edinburg in Kanada gab die Stadt Vancouver ein Bankett. Zunächst waren 300 Personen eingeladen. Dann wurden 100 wieder ausgeladen, weil „man" herausfand, die Etikette lasse es nicht zu, daß jemand mit dem Rücken zu den königlichen Gästen sitzt. Wie die Kanadier den Begriff Etikette auslegen, ist ihre eigene Sache, und nicht nur die Ausgeladenen haben den Herren vom „Protokoll" in Vancouver ihre Meinung über Demokratie und Snobismus gesagt. Bei späteren Gelegenheiten scheint man dann auch nicht mehr so eingestellt gewesen zu sein. Jedenfalls aber ist eine Übertreibung daraus, was man Etikette nennt, lange nicht so schlimm wie eine Taktlosigkeit. Ein Vertreter des kanadischen Ministerpräsidenten benachrichtigte bei der Begrüßung einer wirtschaftlichen Abordnung aus Pakistan die Gäste immerzu als „Inder". Er wußte aber nicht, daß seit 1947 der Name Inder nur noch für die Bewohner der Republik Indien gilt, und daß die Bewohner des damals geteilten Landes keine diese Bezeichnung für sie als sehr peinlich empfinden. Aber das war noch nicht alles. Der Sprecher erklärte weiter zu den Besuchern aus Pakistan, sie seien ja keine Fremden. Wir kennen sie schon längst aus Tausendundeiner Nacht." Man kann mit einem über diese peinlichen Kenntnisse von Literatur und Geschichte nur lächeln. Zweimal hat der eine oder andere der Gäste aus Pakistan in Tausendundeiner Nacht auch unsere Erzählungen als die Abenteuer Sindbads des Seefahrers gelesen. Bei den Worten des besonders Missionierungseifrigen wird ihnen etwa so zumute gewesen sein wie Deutschen, die in Pakistan von einem Regierungsvertreter mit den Worten begrüßt würden: „Sie sind ja keine Fremden. Wir kennen Sie schon längst aus dem Dekameron im Borsalino." Auch ein anderer ziemlicher Vertreter ist jüngst unrühmlich aufgefallen, nämlich der Vertreter des deutschen Konsuls in Basel bei dem Länderspiel der B-Mannschaft Schweiz — Deutschland. Auf der Ehrentribüne und an der Festtafel, die von den Schweizern gegebenen Zeremonie hat er, wie berichtet wird, ständig dreifaches gekippt, daß sein Gehalt so niedrig sei, und daß er sich daher nicht einladen könne. Die diplomatischen Umgangsformen scheinen sich schwerer zu setzen, als man gemeinhin annimmt. Aber den, der sie nicht beherrscht, soll man nicht Analphabet begrüßen lassen oder die Ausland schicken.

LESERBRIEFE

Möchten Sie in Nr. 41 der „Neuen Illustrierten" mehr über Ihren Lieblingsschauspieler oder -schauspielerin erfahren, dann schreiben Sie uns, und wir werden sehen, ob auch die Zuschrift des Herrn Alois aus Meitzdorf mehr ist: Burgers Ein bißle dalibi, daß wir auch derartiges von den „Neuerwarteten Liebenswürdigkeiten" hören. Wir wünschen der Freiheren von Hildebrand, daß sie den schönsten Sonntag ihres Lebens nicht verbringen. Ihre Stimme möchte.

Dr. Ewald Kobi, Dortmund.

*

Mit weich ähnlichen Worten behandelte Ein Leser Herr Alois C. Zuschreiben, in Nr. 41 der „Neuen Illustrierten" die reizende, bezaubernde Schöne mit dem Namen Eva und ihren Mädchen, die mit seinem kleinen Flötchen „hohen Partnerschaft" bei Gelegenheit ihrer Geburtstagsfeier ihre Gäste glaubt einer gewissen Zeit ihrer Gäste wegen nicht wissen. Endlich den Filmwerke nehmen! Nehmt sie, wenn sie wollen! Lieber Leben Sie, Herr Selbacher!

A. G. v. Löwitz, Frankfurt a. M.

*

Ich möchte Herrn Zuschreiber zu seinem Brief in Nummer 41 der „Neuen Illustrierten" folgendes antworten: Ich finde es nicht gut und als ein Zeichen der allmählichen Widerverblödung Deutschlands, daß wir auch in einer deutschen Zeitung wieder einen Brief lesen können, der Ähnlichkeit mit dem „größten Führer aller Zeiten" hat.

Rüdiger Krumpe, Stuttgart.

*

In Nr. 41 der „Neuen Illustrierten" schreibt Horst Gunter Lange, Köln-Mülheim, daß während der deutschen Besetzung von Norwegen „die Norweger" in der Bevölkerung „normale" waren. Ich möchte Herrn Lange antworten: „Die Mehrheit Nor, wenn Sie, Herr Lange, über die von den deutschen ausgeübten Besatzungen während der Besetzung von Norwegen erzählen, bitte ich Sie, die SS-Besatzungen von norwegischen Boden nicht zu vergessen."

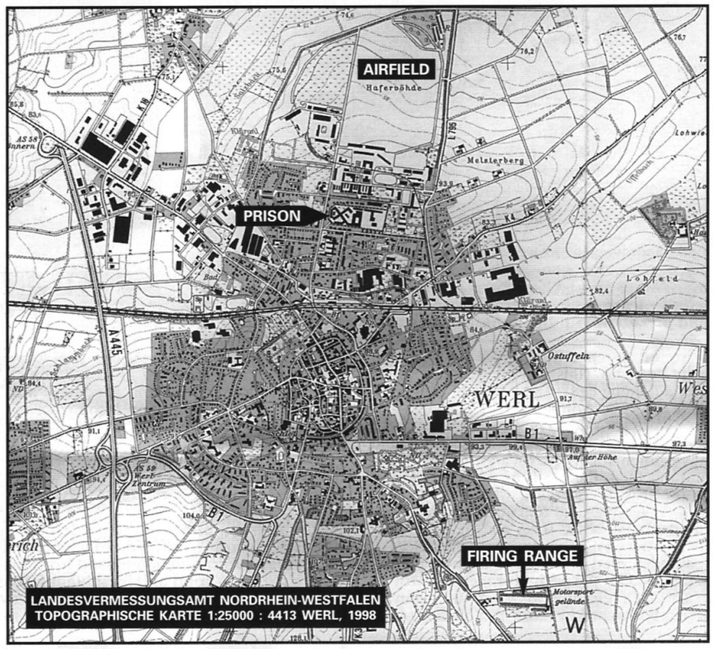
Knut Hinz, Celle

*

In Nr. 41 veröffentlichte die „Neue Illustrierte" ein Bild „Mit hundert Jochen durch die Gaskammer." Dem Zeitpunkt: Man braucht kein Konzentrator zu sein, um durch einer Stunde zu lachen. Ich bin meinen Farben nicht mehr ganz sicher. Bei der Wahrheit: Wenn ich Deutschland einen Schritt in der Verfassung am „Tag der Wahrheit", wollte mir eine besondere wichtige Lesire empfohlen wurde.

Werner Lesire, Essen-Steele.

Between January 1946 and June 1947, a total of 35 prisoners from Werl were shot by a British Army firing-squad. Seven of these were war criminals, the others — mostly Poles — had been sentenced to death for other crimes. Most people conceive military firing-squads as only executing people guilty of treason, soldiers guilty of military crimes (e.g. desertion) or persons convicted of war crimes. Few realise that British firing-squads also executed civilians sentenced to death for common crimes (like murder, rape, etc) by British Military Courts. The executions at Werl took place at the stop-butt of the former Luftwaffe airfield. This was not located on the airfield itself, but about a kilometre south-west of the town along Neheimer Strasse. Today the site has found a new use as a motorcross circuit.



Of the 226 German war criminals detained at Werl, 58 had been condemned to death. Between August 23, 1946, and January 6, 1947, seven of these were executed at Werl itself, being shot by a British firing-squad at the Luftwaffe small-arms firing-range on Neheimer Strasse. The other 51 were transferred to Hameln Prison in 1946 there to await death by musketry or hanging, the latter invariably being carried out by the British chief executioner Albert Pierrepoint (see *After the Battle* No. 89). The seven men who were executed at Werl were Josef Axt, Herbert Grieme, Heinrich Ide, Walter Jantzen, Heinrich Neuschwanger, Georg Stütz and Otto Wenzel.

These seven German war criminals formed only some of the prisoners executed at Werl. In all, between January 7, 1946, and June 3, 1947, 35 prisoners were shot by the British garrison: 26 Poles, one Turk, one Italian and the seven Germans. All were buried in Werl Cemetery.

To accommodate the inmates awaiting execution, six death cells were built in Wing A of Building 1. Each measured 1,50 metres by 2,57 metres with a ceiling three metres high. The cells had no windows, but one whole side had an open grating from floor to ceiling. Death-row prisoners were guarded 24 hours a day. They were not allowed to exercise or go to church with other inmates, and were gradually isolated from their fellow-prisoners as their moment of execution approached. During the last night before execution, a priest would come to their cells to comfort them. Each death sentence carried out had to be reported to three agencies: the Legal Division of the Allied Control Commission for Germany (British Element); the Penal Branch of the Military Government of Nordrhein; and its Public Relations Branch.

In October 1949, with the British due to give up tenure of Hameln Prison in May 1950, Governor Vickers ordered secret plans to be drawn up for the construction of an execution chamber inside Werl prison. The idea was to use the last six cells of the first and second floors of Wing B of Building 1 which had still not been repaired from bomb damage suffered during the war. The walls separating the last three cells on each floor were to be removed, thus creating two large rooms. A gallows was to be installed in the top room, with a trapdoor built in the floor. Albert Pierrepoint came to Werl in December to inspect the proposed alterations and give his advice. The execution chamber was to be ready by May 1, 1950, but in the end nothing came of the scheme.

The remains of the executed prisoners were all buried in Werl Cemetery, in a plot already containing other dead from the war years, none of the 35 graves being marked. In 1967 the German Kriegsgräberfürsorge exhumed all the foreigners (not just the ones executed in 1946-47 but also the Russian POWs and other nationalities who had been buried there during the war) and re-interred them in a new plot elsewhere in the cemetery *(left)*. However, the seven executed Germans were left in place and no trace of their graves remains today, their burial plot having since been erased to make way for new interments.

The only war criminals ever to escape from Werl: ex-Feldwebel Hans Kühn *(left)* and ex-Landesschütze Wilhelm Kappe *(right)*. They got away from a work detail outside the prison on October 26, 1952.

By this time, Werl was a household word in the German Federal Republic. The inhabitants were not exactly pleased that their town had become known, throughout the country and abroad, first and foremost because of its prison. When asked about it by journalists in 1951, the Mayor, Dr Wilhelm Loer, said: 'We at Werl are not at all excited about the fact that we have gained such sad fame through the war criminals' jail. We have other things to offer as well. Let's hope that political reasons are soon eliminated from the question whether one may rob people of their liberty whose guilt has not been unequivocally proven.'

The men and women still detained in Allied jails were a hotly-debated issue which dominated the West German Press and public opinion in the early 1950s. Many if not most Germans were of the opinion that the 'Kriegsverurteilten' (war convicts) — a term which many preferred to the hated word 'Kriegsverbrecher (war criminals) — at Werl and other prisons, and certainly the generals, had been unjustly dragged before a war tribunal and were the innocent victims of revenge justice. Most people held the view that the sooner they were released the better. German politics reflected this situation, centre and right-wing parties in parliament advocating in favour of revision of the verdicts and/or immediate release of the prisoners.

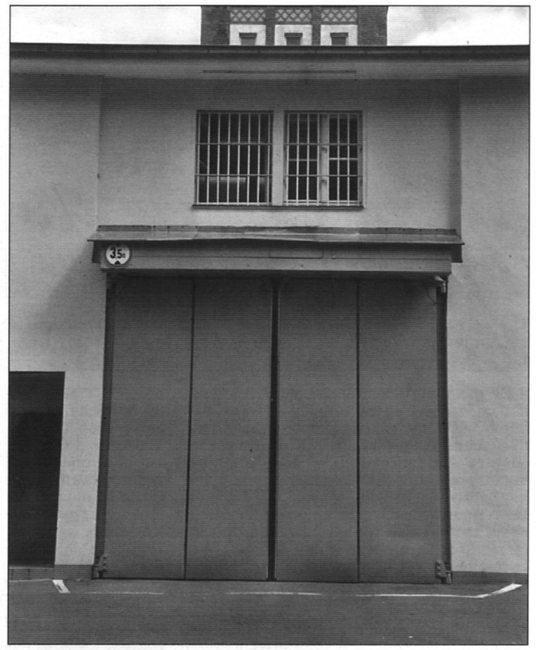
In June 1951, the British High Commissioner for Germany, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, announced that the prisoners at Werl would all get their sentences reduced as an act of clemency. When first informed, the majority of the prisoners rejected a mitigation because what they wanted was a re-trial, a re-opening of the case that would end with them being cleared of all guilt. However this latter option was blocked by a judical problem in that the verdicts handed out by the British tribunals lacked an explanatory statement, making it technically impossible to appeal against such a sentence or reopen a case. The only option was to enter a plea for mercy. Disregarding such moves, the British went ahead with their plans. The life sentences of Kesselring, von Mackensen, Mälzer and Simon were reduced to 21 years, Meyer's to 15 years, and Gallenkamp's to ten years. At the same time, von Manstein's 18 years was reduced to 12 and von Falkenhorst's 20 years to ten.

As the Cold War progressed, the Western Allies began steering towards the re-armament of Germany and integration of the Federal Republic into NATO. The forthcoming creation of the Bundeswehr (finally realised in 1955) provided an strong incentive for the Western Allies to free the old generals in order to create goodwill with their former enemy. Schmidt had already been released in November 1950 and Wolff in late 1951; Mälzer had died in jail on March 24, 1952, but now, one after the other, the remaining generals were released, the official reason given in most cases being ill health. Gallenkamp was released in February 1952, Kesselring and von Mackensen in October 1952, von Manstein in May 1953, von Falkenhorst in July 1953, Simon in 1954 and Meyer in September of that year (his return home being celebrated as a triumph by hundreds of Waffen-SS veterans).

Few inmates ever managed to escape from Werl, but on August 26, 1952, two of the lower-rank war convicts, Hans Kühn and Wilhelm Kappe, managed to escape from a work detail employed outside the prison near Hilbeck, three miles north-west of Werl. Kühn, an ex-Luftwaffe Feldwebel, had been sentenced to 20 years for shooting three Canadian airmen in his home town of Solingen following a bombing raid on November 5, 1944. (According to his own version, other arrested suspects had put the blame on him, thinking that he had disappeared in Russia.) Kappe, a former Landesschütze (home army private), had been guard of a slave-labour camp in Wilhelmshaven and been sentenced to life for shooting a Russian slave worker on October 10, 1944. Their escape went surprisingly easy. Evading the attention of their single guard, they had flagged down a passing car and — in spite of the fact that the 'JV' painted on their trousers clearly marked them as 'Justizverwaltung' prisoners — the driver let them climb aboard. Kappe got off at Milspe, 45 miles from Werl, and Kühn at Wuppertal. Kappe was soon caught but he escaped from Aurich police station before he could be collected and was never heard of again. Kühn hid for a year before he was caught. A month after his escape, he had made an unexpected move when he approached the German weekly *Stern* which sensationalised his story. Recaptured, he was brought back to Werl to finish his sentence, being punished for his escape with an additional six months.

Der Stern
Heft 39 • 5. Jahrgang • 28. September 1952 • Verlagsort Hamburg
Der Bildbericht des STERN
50 PF
Preußens Könige kehrten heim
SE ILLUSTRIERTE
Zehn flohen aus Werl
„Kriegsverbrecher" Feldwebel Hans Kühn erzählt seine Geschichte

A month later, on September 28, *Stern* magazine published a sensational story giving Kühn's own story of his escape and his version of the shooting incident at Solingen in 1944 for which he had been sentenced to 20 years.



Left: **On June 28, 1953 Chancellor Konrad Adenauer paid a surprise visit to Werl prison.** *Right:* **The main gate — then and now.**

Their escape — the only one by convicted war criminals up to that time — caused quite a stir in Germany and Britain and, as a result, security at Werl was tightened. On April 17, 1953, Governor Vickers —'Old Vickers' as the inmates called him — was relieved and replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel H. S. Meech (a former commander of Spandau) who enforced a strict adherence to the prison regulations and withdrew many of the privileges acquired by the inmates over the years. The vice-president of the German Red Cross in Westfalen-Lippe, Else Weecks, who often visited the inmates and was known as 'the Angel of Werl', was also suddenly denied access to the jail.

On June 28, 1953 — in the middle of the spate of amnesty releases — Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, having secured permission on short notice from High Commissioner Kirkpatrick by telephone, paid an unexpected visit to the prison. (He was at Werl to attend a pilgrimage by 60,000 former Silesian Germans.) At this time, the jail still held some 85 war criminals. Many of the inmates were left speechless when confronted with the Bundeskanzler. Adenauer stayed for just under an hour during which he met several prisoners, assuring them that the Federal Government would do everything to improve their conditions and look for ways to achieve a speedy release. Among those he talked to were ex-Generals von Falkenhorst and Meyer and ex-Obergefreiter Johann Neitz. The latter was somewhat of a 'cause célèbre' because he had rescued two Canadian airmen shot down over Hameln in 1945 from drowning but nevertheless been sentenced to life (later commuted to 21 years) for shooting a third airman in the leg when the latter tried to escape.

Crowds of curious town inhabitants and Silesian pilgrims line the street as Adenauer's Mercedes drives off from the prison.

None of the field-marshals and generals served out their full sentences, all of them being released as an act of clemency between 1952 and 1954. The official reason given for the premature release was usually ill health, but most people judged that the former soldiers were mainly set free to clear the way for the creation of the Bundeswehr. General opinion was that the Germans could hardly expect to join NATO if some of their foremost soldiers were still in jail as war criminals. The last to be released, on September 7, 1954 — almost exactly ten years to the day after his capture — was Kurt Meyer, here being welcomed out by a representative of the German Red Cross. On the left, Meyer's wife Käthe. After his release, Meyer got a job as sales manager of the Andreas Brewery at Hagen-Haspe and became chief national speaker of the HIAG, the Association of former Waffen-SS members in West Germany. In 1957 he published his war memoirs *Grenadiere*. He died of a heart attack on December 23, 1961, while celebrating his 52nd birthday.

It took another four years before the last Germans convicted of war crimes left Werl, the last being released on June 24, 1957. The British garrison then departed, turning over the jail to the West German civilian authorities. British tenure of Werl prison had come to an end.

Werl prison was an Allied jail for over 12 years, the last German war convicts being released from it on June 24, 1957. Among the inmates freed that day were Hans Kühn (right), the recaptured escapee of 1953, and Wilhelm Katerndahl (left). A former Ortsgruppenleiter (Nazi party town chief) of Radevormwald, Katerndahl had been sentenced to life for shooting a shot-down RAF airman in June 1944, a sentence that had been commuted to 21 years in February 1950. Note how the prison's main gate has been altered since Adenauer's visit in 1953.

All quiet on the approach road to the present-day Justizvollzugsanstalt.

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AFTER THE BATTLE

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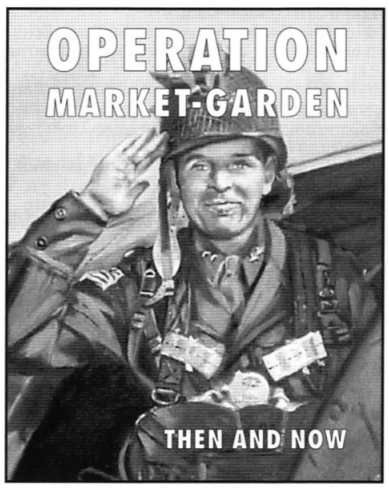

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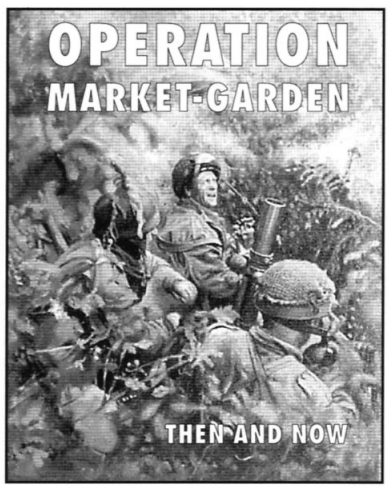

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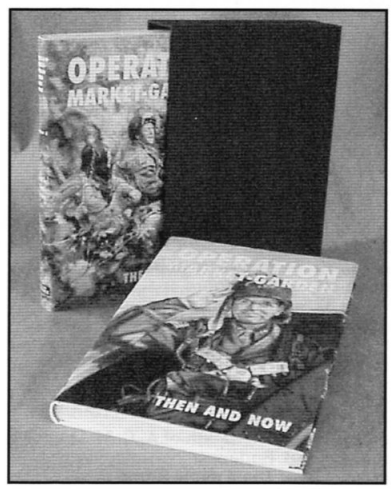

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The break-out battle by the Guards Armoured Division, spearhead of the ground army, is likewise illustrated with an unprecedented wealth of photographs. The second day of the operation, September 18, sees the Guards reaching the 101st Airborne at Eindhoven, making their first contact with the airborne army.

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The Planning of Operation 'Market-Garden'
The Battle of the Belgian Canals
Second Army prepares for Operation 'Garden'
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***VOLUME 2** of this two-volume history of Operation 'Market-Garden' continues the story as XXX Corps links up with the 82nd Airborne at Nijmegen which leads to the dramatic and spectacular capture of the vital bridges there over the Waal river. But at Arnhem the tide of battle has already turned. The main force of lst Airborne is thrown back to the Oosterbeek perimeter, leaving John Frost's isolated force at the road bridge to fight it out till the end.*

As the Polish Brigade is dropped south of the Rhine, and the ground army desperately tries to relieve the beleaguered British paras, down in the south the Germans launch repeated attacks on the narrow corridor in an attempt to cut the Allied supply artery. As savage battles rage for possession of 'Hell's Highway', the airborne battle is lost and on September 26 the survivors of lst Airborne are evacuated back across the Rhine.

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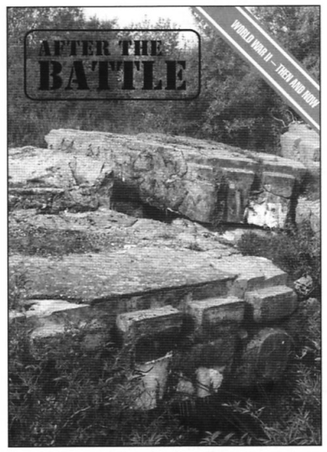

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